

FRIVOLA

*A. JESSOPP, D.D.*

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# FRIVOLA

BY

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*London*

T. FISHER UNWIN

PATERNOSTER SQUARE

MDCCCXCVI



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*And she talked on—we talked truly ! upon  
all things—substance—shadow—  
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses—of the  
reapers in the corn—  
Of the little children from the schools, seen  
winding through the meadow—  
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept  
poorer by its scorn !*

MRS. BROWNING.



## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
AN ANTIQUARY'S GHOST STORY ...	7
QUEEN MARY'S FOOL ...	16
UPS AND DOWNS OF AN OLD NUNNERY ...	28
A COUNTRY COUSIN IN LONDON ...	83
THE DYING OUT OF THE MARVELLOUS ...	III
CLOCKS AND WATCHES ...	122
THE PHENOMENA OF DOUBLES ...	131
DREAMS ...	140
A NIGHT OF WAKING ...	149
THE PHANTOM COACH ...	158
BOOKS THAT HAVE HELPED ME ...	183



## *L'Envoi.*

*THIS volume owes its appearance to the pressure put upon me by my readers, who have asked me to republish, and so make more accessible to them, some of the Fugitive Pieces which it contains.*

*The first paper appeared as a letter to The Athenæum of January 10, 1880, when the facts were very fresh in my memory; but I did not give it the title which the astute and sagacious editor of that journal invented. I am not an antiquary, and lack all those qualities which an antiquary ought to be gifted with, and I never pretended that I had seen a Ghost, nor do I quite know what a Ghost is. However, the letter produced an immense sensation at the time; and inasmuch as I have again and again been compelled to relate the facts*

*by word of mouth which I had already committed to paper, possibly more faithfully and certainly more simply than I find it possible to do under personal cross-examination, I have thought it better to re-issue the narrative, which all may read at leisure, and so save myself from having to repeat the old story.*

Queen Mary's Fool appeared in The Athenæum also.

*The Ups and Downs of an Old Nunnery came out in Good Words. I think it a very pathetic and suggestive story, but my friends tell me I am a very bad critic of my own writings, and I can only retort that this is hardly possible, for I must know more about them than anyone else, and I protest vehemently that young men and maidens—to say nothing of their seniors—will be the better for reading this story of the Nunnery. The only weak point in it—and it is a very weak point in this age, when fiction reigns supreme in literature—is that it is all true, from beginning to end. Alas! what a pass we have come to,*

*when an author has to apologise to the public  
for telling the plain truth and no more !*

*The remaining papers in the volume, with  
the exception of the last, have all appeared  
in The Illustrated London News, and as far  
as I know, everything in them too is plain un-  
varnished fact for which I could give chapter  
and verse if they were wanted. Even the aw-  
ful doings of the dragon of Sudbury, in the  
fifth paper, are no inventions of mine; and if  
they are not true, who am I that I should  
set myself to prove the negative? I have given  
my authorities, and isn't that enough?*

\* \* \* \*

*The editor of The Scarning Review, from  
whose scathing treatment I have in the course  
of my career suffered severely, will not pass  
without grave censure the last few lines. She  
tells me that our dear old Biddy was sly  
enough and clever enough to invent as well as  
to relate, and that in the good old soul's  
reminiscences appeals must have been made  
to the credulity of one at least of her hearers.*

*Biddy is dead, and de mortuis nil nisi bonum is a recognised canon of criticism. So far as her story is capable of being tested I have tested it. The local colouring, at any rate, was not Biddy's. Have I not been to Breccles Hall, and surveyed the ground ?*

*The last paper, "Books that have helped me," was contributed to The Forum. I shall always feel grateful to the editor of The Forum for suggesting this subject to me. It set me thinking along what lines my mind had travelled and grown in my earlier manhood; and that kind of introspection is a very useful process for us all to go through at some stages of our development.*

*Would it be quite too cruel a question to ask of some men and women—"What books have marred you?"*

## *AN ANTIQUARY'S GHOST STORY.*

*Do I sleep? do I dream?  
Do I wander and doubt?  
Are things what they seem?  
Or is visions about?*

LITTLE more than two months [grown now, as I print for the second time, into sixteen years] have passed since my own personal experience of mental phenomena was strikingly enlarged by the occurrence with which the following narrative deals. Yet already I find that round the original story there has gathered a surprising accumulation of the mythical element, and that I myself am in danger of becoming a hero of romance in more senses than one. As I object to be looked upon as a kind of medium to whom

supernatural visitations are vouchsafed, and, on the other hand, do not wish to be set down as a crazy dreamer whose disorganised nervous system renders him abnormally liable to fantastic delusions, I have yielded to the earnest request of some who have begged me to make public the following paper. I am told that there are those who busy themselves in collecting similar stories, and if it be so, it is better they should hear the facts from me than after they have passed through other channels. The narrative was written, at the request of a friend, not many days after the event, when all the circumstances were fresh in my recollection.

On the 10th of October, 1879, I drove over from Norwich to Mannington Hall to spend the night at Lord Orford's. Though I was in perfect health and high spirits, it is fair to state that, for some weeks previously, I had had a great deal to think about, some little anxiety, and some considerable mental

strain of one kind or another. I was not, however, conscious of anything approaching weariness, irritability, or "fag." I arrived at 4 p.m., and was engaged in pleasant and animated conversation till it was time to dress for dinner. We dined at seven; our party numbered six persons. Of these, four at least had been great travellers. I myself was rather a listener; the talk was general and discursive, and amused and interested me greatly. Not for a single moment did it turn upon the supernatural; it was chiefly concerned with questions of art and the experiences of men who had seen a great deal of the world, and could describe intelligently what they had seen and comment upon it suggestively. I have very rarely been at a more pleasant party. After dinner we played a rubber. We "left off as we began," and as two of the guests had some distance to drive we broke up at half-past ten.

The main object of my going over to Mannington was to examine and take notes upon

some very rare books in Lord Orford's library, which I had been anxiously wishing to get a sight of for some years, but had never been fortunate enough to meet with up to this time. I asked leave to sit up for some hours and make transcripts. His lordship at first wished me to let his valet remain in attendance to see all lights put out, but as this would have embarrassed me and compelled me to go to bed earlier than I wished, and as it seemed likely that I should be occupied till two or three in the morning, it was agreed that I should be left to my own devices and the servants should be allowed to retire. By eleven o'clock I was the only person downstairs, and I was very soon busily at work and absorbed in my occupation.

The room in which I was writing is a large one, with a huge fireplace and a grand old chimney ; and it is needless to say that it is furnished with every comfort and luxury. The library opens into this room, and I had

to pass out from where I was sitting into this library and get upon a chair to reach the volumes I wanted to examine. There were six small volumes in all. I took them down and placed them at my right hand in a little pile, and set to work—sometimes reading, sometimes writing. As I finished with a book I placed it in front of me. There were four silver candlesticks upon the table, the candles all burning, and, as I am a chilly person, I sat myself at one corner of the table with the fire at my left, and at intervals, as I had finished with a book, I rose, knocked the fire together, and stood up to warm my feet. I continued in this way at my task till nearly one o'clock. I had got on better than I expected, and I had only one more book to occupy me. I rose, wound up my watch, and opened a bottle of seltzer water, and I remember thinking to myself that I should get to bed by two after all. I set to work on the last little book. I had been engaged upon it about half an

hour, and was just beginning to think that my work was drawing to a close, when, *as I was actually writing*, I saw a large white hand within a foot of my elbow. Turning my head, there sat a figure of a somewhat large man, with his back to the fire, bending slightly over the table, and apparently examining the pile of books that I had been at work upon. The man's face was turned away from me, but I saw his closely cut reddish-brown hair, his ear and shaved cheek, the eyebrow, the corner of the right eye, the side of the forehead, and the large high cheek-bone. He was dressed in what I can only describe as a kind of ecclesiastical habit of thick corded silk or some such material, close up to the throat, and a narrow rim or edging, of about an inch broad, of satin or velvet serving as a stand-up collar, and fitting close to the chin. The right hand, which had first attracted my attention, was clasping, without any great pressure, the left hand; both hands

were in perfect repose, and the large blue veins of the right hand were conspicuous. I remember thinking that the hand was like the hand of Velasquez's magnificent "Dead Knight" in the National Gallery. I looked at my visitor for some seconds, and was perfectly sure that he was not a reality. A thousand thoughts came crowding upon me, but not the least feeling of alarm, or even uneasiness ; curiosity and a strong interest were uppermost. For an instant I felt eager to make a sketch of my friend, and I looked at a tray on my right for a pencil ; then I thought, "Upstairs I have a sketch-book—shall I fetch it ?" There he sat, and I was fascinated ; afraid, not of his staying, *but lest he should go*. Stopping in my writing, I lifted my left hand from the paper, stretched it out to the pile of books, and moved the top one. I cannot explain why I did this—my arm passed in front of the figure, and it vanished. I was simply disappointed and nothing more. I went on with my writing

as if nothing had happened, perhaps for another five minutes, and I had actually got to the last few words of what I had determined to extract when the figure appeared again, exactly in the same place and attitude as before. I saw the hands close to my own ; I turned my head again, to examine him more closely, and I was framing a sentence to address to him, when I discovered that I did not dare to speak. *I was afraid of the sound of my own voice.* There he sat, and there sat I. I turned my head again to my work, and finished writing the two or three words I still had to write. The paper and my notes are at this moment before me, and exhibit not the slightest tremor or nervousness. I could point out the words I was writing when the phantom came and when he disappeared. Having finished my task, I shut the book and threw it on the table ; it made a slight noise as it fell—the figure vanished.

Throwing myself back in my chair, I sat

for some seconds looking at the fire with a curious mixture of feeling, and I remember wondering whether my friend would come again, and if he did whether he would hide the fire from me. Then first there stole upon me a dread and a suspicion that I was beginning to lose my nerve. I remember yawning ; then I rose, lit my bedroom candle, took my books into the inner library, mounted the chair as before, and replaced five of the volumes ; the sixth I brought back and laid upon the table where I had been writing when the phantom did me the honour to appear to me. By this time I had lost all sense of uneasiness. I blew out the four candles and marched off to bed, where I slept the sleep of the just or the guilty—I know not which—but I slept very soundly.

This is a simple and unvarnished narrative of facts. Explanation, theory, or inference I leave to others,

## *QUEEN MARY'S FOOL.*

*I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad.—As You LIKE IT.*

IT is a fact to be deplored in the march of progress that we are waxing less gay and more grim from generation to generation. There are many causes which contribute to bring this about, such as the general desire on the part of everybody to behave himself like everybody else—the repressive force exercised by the police whose business it is to stop merry people from making a noise and laughing too loud, and to punish severely anything in the shape of a practical joke; the dreary uniformity in male dress; the dismal tyranny of sombre colours in our attire; the ghastly prevalence of ex-

aminations which have an incalculable effect in depressing the spirits of young and old, and the deplorable delusion that it is the duty of everybody to work and the duty of nobody to play. These and other influences which might be dwelt on all work in the direction of making us in these later ages of the world's history more respectable but a great deal less hilarious than our grandsires were. But perhaps the printing press has as much to answer for as anything else. Of course I do not forget *Punch*, but I am inclined to lay a great deal of blame at the door of that incomparable serial. The truth is, we all now take in *Punch*, and we all have our laugh on Wednesday and relapse into seriousness till the next Wednesday ; the mischief being that everybody has the benefit of the same joke, and everybody has his share in the drolleries of the same jester. Time was when the favoured few had real, live, paid Fools to make them laugh when they were sad, and to keep their spirits up

when they were low. There was no need to read jokes, or to read about them, when they were four-and-twenty hours old ; there were no literary Fools, but the Fool was, we may say, a member of a profession, and his training made him up to any emergency that might arise. Men called him a fool because he made himself ridiculous ; but as often as not (as you may see in Shakespeare) he proved the wisest man in a company, speaking out what none but he dared utter, and yet keeping his head cool and not likely to lose it on the block. There are thousands of good stories of Fools and their sayings—aye, and of their doings too—which shall not be repeated here ; but it is not known to all that instances of female Fools are by no means rare. Female gladiators Juvenal tells us of ; for when civilisation grows rank the women always must needs vie with men in their follies and vices—sometimes, too, in their virtues and accomplishments ; but the earliest mention of a female Fool—I do

not mean a foolish female—as far as I know, occurs in one of Seneca's letters, who tells us that she played to his wife ; that her name was Harpaste ; that she had long been what he calls “an hereditary nuisance in the house” ; and yet that he himself was very partial to this kind of monster. You may read what little more Seneca says about the poor woman in the tenth Epistle of the fifth book, and you will see how the moralist, as his fashion was, went on to improve the occasion like some Puritan divine or some Scotch *meenister*.

I know not if many instances could be found of a female Fool being kept in any English household, but I do know that Queen Mary kept such an one even to her dying day. In that curious book, published more than fifty years ago by Sir Francis Madden, entitled “The Privy Purse Expenses of the Princess Mary,” there are so many notices of payments made on account of “Jane the Fool” that we can

hardly open the volume and turn over half a dozen pages without coming upon them. There are charges entered for her dress, "for a coffer for her," for "the keeper of her horse," and very frequent payments "to the Barbor for shaving Jany's hed" (the fee for which was apparently 4d. in 1543, and raised after this to 8d.). These Privy Purse expenses begin in December, 1537, and extend to December, 1544; that is, they have to do with the time when "the Lady Mary," after her submission to her father and reconciliation with him, was allowed to set up a separate establishment, and they continue almost down to the time when she was named in the Third Act of Succession as "the Kinges Highnes daughter." During all these eight years Jane the Fool was her constant attendant, and was a great favourite with the Princess. In July, 1544, the poor woman had a serious illness; and again, two years after Mary had become queen, we find a note of a

payment “to a woman dwelling at Burye,  
*for healing Jane the Foole her eye.*” Even Henry the Eighth himself had a lurking regard for her : I suspect she was too shrewd to try any jokes upon the grim king. Sir Francis Madden tells us that, “in all probability, this very person is intended to be represented in the interesting painting by Holbein of Henry the Eighth and his family, which formerly ornamented the meeting-room of the Society of Antiquaries at Somerset House, and which is now at Windsor”; and he gives us a reference to an order of the king in 1540, whereby Sir Anthony Denny is required to deliver certain quantities of silks and stuffs, among other people, to “Jane the Fool.”

Unhappily the original of Queen Mary’s will has disappeared, and in that copy of it which still exists in Harl. MS. 6949, and which Sir F. Madden prints as he finds it, there is a tantalising omission which will now probably never be supplied, though we

are told, “Then follow in the will several particular legacies *to her women and other servants about her*, which in all amount to £3,400.” Whether any particular legacy was left to “Jane the Fool” it is idle now to conjecture. Even the woman’s name was lost, and few could have expected that it would ever be discovered. During the course of some researches into Norfolk history, however, I happen to have stumbled upon some scraps of information about “Jane the Fool” which may be of interest to some of my readers.

Among the closest and the dearest of the Princess Mary’s friends and attendants were Henry Jerningham and his wife, who was her lady in waiting, and who attended upon her at her coronation. The queen took an early opportunity of knighting Mr. Jerningham, appointed him Vice-Chamberlain in 1556, and Master of the Horse in 1557, and, further, made him some very extensive grants of land, a portion of which,

especially the Manor of Cossey in Norfolk, is still in the possession of Sir Henry Jerningham's lineal descendant, Lord Stafford. At Queen Elizabeth's accession all hope of further preferment was gone for Sir Henry Jerningham, being, as he was, a firm and conscientious Catholic, and strongly opposed to the tenets of the Reformation. Accordingly he retired from Court, and came down to Norfolk, where he employed himself in building Cossey Hall, which still stands, and has never ceased to be occupied from that day to this by the Jerninghams, who have had the good taste to leave the old house intact, though a glorious mansion has been added on to the original and less ambitious pile.

Sir Henry Jerningham died in 1573, having made his will on the 15th of August of the previous year. In it occurs the following bequest :—“ Item, I give and bequeath to old *Jone Cooper* my old gown ; And also I will that my wife for term of her

life, and after her decease my heirs, shall pay yearly to the said *Jone Cooper*, as my bequest and legacy, the sum of xxvis. viijd., by even portions at the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel and on our Lady Day in Lent, every year, for term of the life of the said *Jone Cooper*, with meat and drink and Lodging within my house : And if it shall fortune that my wife during her life, or any heir after her decease, shall by any occasion remove or put out the said *Jone Cooper* from my house, Then I will and bequeath to her out of my Manor of Cossey, to be paid yearly by even portions, . . . the sum of Four Pounds by year, . . . for her maintenance and finding for term of her life."

Frances Lady Jerningham survived her husband more than ten years. Cossey was settled upon her ladyship for life, and her eldest son resided at Wingfield Castle, on the borders of Suffolk, which three centuries ago must have been a far more

magnificent abode than Cossey. But Lady Jerningham (her son was not knighted) kept her state at Cossey, and lived there as a representative personage, not without suspicion of harbouring priests and having mass said in her house, spite of the penal laws. Her will, too, is before me, and by one of its clauses she directs as follows :—  
“Also I do give unto *Joane Fool* four pounds in money, or twenty shillings a year as long as she liveth, which shall be thought best for her at the discretion of my executor, *over and besydes the Four pounds yearly which was given her by my late husband*; and I give unto her one feather-bed bolster and covering, and all these premises (*sic*) not otherwise except my son shall refuse to keep and maintain her during her life in his house, the which I do rather wish for him to keep her, *for that she hath been a long servant* (*sic*), than to put her away out of his house.”

So that “Jane the Foole” is Sir Henry’s

“Jone Cooper,” and Lady Jerningham’s “Joane Foole.”

In August, 1578, Queen Elizabeth paid a visit to Norwich ; and on Tuesday, the 19th, Her Majesty set out from the Bishop’s Palace to “hunt” at Cossey Park—hunt in the dog-days !—At St. Bennet’s Gates she was stopped by a “Pageant,” which is duly described in Nichols’ “Progresses” (vol. ii. p. 151). What the “hunting” could have been it is difficult to imagine. I have my own suspicion in the matter, but I forbear from stating it now. It has been said, and is generally believed, that Sir Henry Jerningham entertained Her Majesty. This is certainly false, nor do I believe that his son was present on the occasion. No mention of any entertainment is to be found ; and there was no time for the “hunting” after the “pleasant show” and the Latin speech of the minister of the Dutch Church. But it is quite conceivable, and to me it seems probable, that *one*

object of the Queen in visiting Cossey at all was to see old "Jone Foole," whom she must well have remembered thirty or forty years before at her father's court, with her shorn head and her motley dress, and her jokes and drollery. Whether she did see her, talk over old scenes, and leave some remembrance behind her, I suppose we shall never know. All that, and a great deal more, has gone down into silence. It is pleasant to be able to prove that "Joane Foole" was not turned out of Cossey in her old age; pleasant to find that the poor woman continued to be kept to the end as a retainer in the household in which she had lived so long; for in the parish register of Cossey I find under the year 1585 the following entry : "Sepulta fuit Johana Cowper, 14<sup>o</sup> die Aprilis."

## *UPS AND DOWNS OF AN OLD NUNNERY.*

*“ My lady Prioress, by your leve,  
So that I wist I shuld you not agreve,  
I wolde demen, that ye tellen shold  
A tale next, if so were that ye wold.  
Now wol ye vouchesauf, my lady dere ? ”  
“ Gladly,” quoth she, “ and saide as ye shul here.”*

CANTERBURY TALES.

### I.

NO wise man will ever begin to read any history worth reading without having a map before him. I give notice that I am going to try my hand at a short history more or less veracious ; therefore it will be necessary for my readers to open the map of Norfolk, and to follow me with the eye as I take a brief survey of the ground.

From Hunstanton, at the north-west corner of the county, to Downham Market, lying almost due south, there runs, for a distance of twenty-five miles as the crow flies, a line of low sand-hills, as we may call them, which mark the ancient coastline of Norfolk on this side, on which a number of villages grew up slowly many ages ago, when the river Ouse flowed much nearer to the aforesaid villages than it does now.

About half-way between Hunstanton and Downham lies the once flourishing town of Lynn, and if you look you will see that the river Ouse is all in all to Lynn, or, at any rate, that it was so in the old days. The Ouse was the western boundary beyond which it was not worth while for the Norfolk men in the early times to fix their habitations; for all to the westward of the river stretched an enormous morass, say fifteen miles from north to south, and eight or ten from east to west. Its boundary

on the east was the Ouse, on the west the Nen. It is even now a dreary region, a land of marshes and big drains and swamps. The water is naught, for all its horrible abundance, but the land is very rich in pasture such as cattle thrive on. There is one portion of this fenland which rises a few feet above the general level of the surrounding marshes, and which in Roman times—to go no farther back—must have presented the appearance of an island, pretty much as the Isle of Dogs did in times not so very far removed from our own; and gradually there grew up here, too, some villages which are now remarkable for their very magnificent churches, each with some interesting feature of its own. The Roman occupiers of the land may be said to have *made* this district what it is, by raising a stupendous rampart to keep out the sea, which had a trick of inundating the country hereabouts, and this immense sea-wall remains to this day.

Nevertheless the Great Ouse was periodically overflowing large breadths of the marshland on this side and on that, and the struggle between the stubborn industry and energy of man, and the sullen river crawling along and floundering and sprawling over the meadows and drowning the herds, never ceased. There were always wide tracts of muddy waste and loneliness which had their tales to tell of broken hearts and disappointment and sorrow, if only there were anybody who cared to listen to the dull and dreary stories. And all this went on for hundreds of years.

Then there came a time when England was cursed with the curse of long wars, and when the law of the stronger prevailed, and when might carried it over right—when, indeed, there was *no* right and the weak had to go to the wall, and poor men and women despaired of any redress for their sufferings and of any security for their lives, and any hope anywhere of peace or happy-

ness in this world. And they said to themselves and to one another, “Let’s give it up, this vain and cruel contest with the pitiless ones. Let’s go and hide ourselves in the deserts and in the swamps, where no one will come and hunt for us, and where we will eat our own bread if we can grow any, and catch our own fish, and milk our own kine. If we enter into the city we shall die then, and if we sit still we die also. Now, therefore, come let us hide ourselves among the tall reeds shaken by the winds, where the wild-fowl make their nests and leave their eggs. Peradventure the fierce and strong will not miss nor find us. If they kill us we shall but die.”

So they slunk away and hid their heads by twos and threes, and they gathered strength for the future from the hope that where wicked men were not, there only God was to be found; and they kept one another’s hearts up by resolving to lift up those hearts to the unseen Father, and

to seek Him day and night in prayer and praise, if haply they might bring Him nearer to themselves who was their only help in those very troublous times.

Thus it came to pass that once upon a time—and that means in the times before the Norman conqueror came to make himself master of England—a certain damsel, whose heart had been strangely stirred, looked about for some lonely place where she might “serve God,” as the phrase was, without disturbance from any earthly enemies, and she found for herself a spot which in the after time was called Crabhouse, and then was all wild and desolate, and where for a great distance round there were no dwellings of men. Under her guidance there gathered sundry other damsels, and they built for themselves a little chapel to the honour of God and the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist, in the which for many a day they kept up the worship of the Heavenly Father.

So runs the story. It is all written in old French, which my Parisian friends would find a little hard to read, but it must be all true, for it is so very old. Were the damsels all lovely and graceful and lady-like and well-to-do ? I should say decidedly not. I suspect they were poor spinsters of a very uncertain age ; they probably could only just read or write ; they had no friends, and they must have been very ill-clad, very cold, very rheumatic, and every other day they must have had the ague.

The place where these poor women settled and tried to hide themselves was just at the edge of that sloppy island that I have mentioned before. It was on the left bank of the Ouse, and it got to be called Wiggenhall St. Mary in the after time.

Was their chapel a very gorgeous edifice, with star-y-pointing pinnacles, and stained-glass windows, and all sorts of beautiful

things to delight the eyes and bring joy to the damsels ? Very decidedly not, again. It was at best a wretched little shanty, built of drift-wood that had been carried down the Ouse, and it was covered with a mean roof thatched with the reeds that the poor damsels had to cut with their own hands from the river bank, and furnished with a log or two to sit on, and a mud floor, and, perhaps, some ugly little image of the Virgin and her Babe ; and the wind and rain came in through the tiny apertures that served for windows, in which there was never a pane of glass, but only provided with rough shutters which were set up against the storms ; and then the walls were made of logs, and between the logs there was more mud which the damsels had puddled with their own poor hands.

But the damsels held on to their little habitations, and a priest came from time to time, ministered in their chapel, and

gave them words of comfort and counsel ; and they worked hard and prayed hard, and little by little the look of their settlement began to improve, and there went up a good report of them and people came to look at them, and came not empty-handed, and what had been a mere wilderness of sedge and ooze became almost a pleasant place to visit, and the damsels had made it into the semblance of a quiet home.

So the years went on. But in A.D. 1086 the great Conqueror sent forth his orders by which the whole realm of England was divided among certain commissioners, who were bidden to make a great survey of every cultivated acre, and to put it all down in their return to the great king. And there came, as I think, an evil day for the poor damsels. For the king's officers found them out, and they asked them, sternly, "Who are ye ? And whose land is this that ye are keeping your cows

on, and growing hemp and oats and osiers on, and building your houses on, not to speak of that chapel of yours ? Who does it all belong to ?" And the damsels shrank before the great bearded men, and they answered, tremblingly, "This land is ours. It was but a poor swamp a while ago, and we have made it what it is. Who should it belong to but to us ?"

But the bearded men laughed scornfully at the damsels, and they said, "Ye are squatters, and nothing else ! The land cannot be yours. Ye stole it from somebody. Speak up ; who did ye steal it from ?" So the damsels were very frightened, and they pitched upon somebody who was a recognised landowner hereabouts, but who he was nobody can now tell. He may have been anybody, but he gave them a certificate or *charter*, testifying that they held the land of him, and that charter was their title-deed. The story goes that they kept that charter, and handed it down

in safe custody to those that came after.

How long the damsels kept up their method of life in the swamp, which gradually began to assume less and less the appearance of desolation and loneliness till the little settlement had become a patch of reclaimed land, there is no evidence to show. I daresay other damsels, the rejected, the undowered, and, now and then, a lonely and childless widow with some few goods and chattels of her own, joined them. The poor women, doubtless, went about doing some little good in their own simple and unambitious way ; sometimes took care of other women's babies when their mothers had to go out fishing for eels and picking up oysters and mussels for a livelihood ; sometimes they adopted some wretched little orphan ; sometimes tried their hands at nursing the sick, or at teaching young girls who wanted teaching sorely ; and sometimes they laid out

the dead and helped to bury the corpse in the muddy grave ; doing it all in a quiet, business-like way, making no fuss and getting no honour and glory from it all—except only that sort of recognition which takes the shape of a wring of the hand from a great horny fist, and now and then a sob which needed no words to make it eloquent, and now and then a whisper from quivering, bloodless lips, saying, “Kiss me, sister. Kiss me, poor sinner—only once—before I die !” And one by one the poor damsels passed away, too ; emaciated by years of ague and racked in every joint by the chronic rheumatism, and glad to end it all because yonder there was the great hope of better things. But there were others who took their places, and went on doing as they did, and living just as humbly.

But one day there came tidings that the waters of the great deep were rolling in. Did the huge waves come tumbling over

the Roman bank?—or the clouds of heaven pour down their burden of rain so heavily that the lazy Ouse could not carry off the rainfall?—or had some portentous tides risen up and driven the river back, saying, angrily, as it were, “We want no more of you”?—I know not. Only this is told us, that one day there was a great flood, and in a few hours it had swept away all the labours of years, and they that were left of the poor damsels found themselves houseless and homeless—the place knew them no more. There is some reason to fear that almost all of the good sisters were simply drowned, for we only hear of a single survivor, and her name was Sister Joanna; and because she had no place to hide her head in now, she made herself a little cabin in the churchyard of Wiggenhall Magdalene, which was about a couple of miles from the old Crabhouse settlement, and there I suppose she ended her days. They called her an anchorite, be-

cause she lived all alone with none to minister to her wants, and she was venerated by the people thereabout as a holy woman and one better than themselves : and there, I suppose, she died, and there lie her bones, unless some crazy body-snatcher has dug them up since then, as the body-snatchers are prone to do.

But though the flood may have drowned almost all the damsels, and certainly did overwhelm their dwellings and their chapel, and all the work of their hands, yet even great floods subside at last. And so it came to pass that after a while the re-claimed land—of course very much the worse for the deluge—rose again as the river subsided ; and once more the question came up, Who did the land belong to, now that the good women were all dead ? This time the question was easily settled, for it *escheated*—that is, reverted to the Lord of the Manor of Wiggenhall St. Mary—*en engleys Moder Cristes*, as the dear

old chronicle explains it—and the name of this good man was Allan Fitz Richard of Wiggenhall.

At this point there comes in another side-light. I daresay some may have already said to themselves before they have read thus far, “Who performed the services for the damsels in their chapel, and gave them the sacrament, and prayed with them when they were dying, and buried them when they were dead ?” Well, it so happens that we know something about this good man. His name was Aylmer Cook, and when the flood came he escaped it, and he survived it apparently for some years, and he was known in the neighbourhood as Aylmer Kok, *le chapeleyn de Crabhus*. In those days the clergy might marry if they pleased, and in Norfolk almost all the clergy were married men, and the good chaplain was married too, and he was not only a husband but a father, for he had a son named

Allan, and his wife's name was Agnes. Now, mistress Agnes was a lady by birth, for she was none other than the sister of Allan Fitz Richard whom I mentioned before. And it looks very much as if brother and sister had a strong love either for each, for Agnes called her son after her brother's name, and her brother gave her a not inconsiderable dower. For when the little estate which had been flooded when the damsels had been drowned reverted to Allan Fitz Richard, he would have none of it, but he gave it over to his sister and her husband, and it became their possession to deal with as they would. The worthy chaplain and his wife now did their best with the lands that had come to them, and having scruples (such as were very strong indeed in those days) about appropriating to their own use what had once been set apart for the service of God in any special way, they made the land over, after the fashion of those days,

for the support of certain religious houses to form part of their endowments ; but in some way or other, which it is difficult to explain, they reserved a portion of the estate for the continual maintenance of the original establishment at Crabhouse, if it should ever be revived.

It seems, too, that the little society *was* kept up. It seems that there still remained some remains of the old buildings, such as they were, and I guess that now and then some attempts were made to revive the old common life, and the old devotion, and the old habits of usefulness and self-denial which had been the glory and the beauty of the little society at its first starting. But evidently there was no leading spirit now, and no head—no rapt devotee with her spasms of awful penitence and throbs of an absorbing love, and yet with a clear brain that looked difficulties in the face and saw how they were to be overcome ; one, too, who had the gift of governing

those most difficult of creatures to govern firmly, to wit—good women with a call. Failing such a head the body languished, although the old establishment of the damsels got to be called a Nunnery—which was a grand name, though it meant much less then than it got to mean a century or two later. For the organisation of these houses for devout women, who wished to live in the society of their own sex, and to help one another in attempting to lead a higher life than they had strength of will and patience to live while in commerce with the world—that organisation had become much more elaborate and much more precise in England than it had been in the days when the damsels first went away into the wilderness ; and such little communities began to assert themselves and to get just a little airified, much in the same way that many a trumpery school for little boys in a back street calls itself a college. So now we

begin to hear of these little humble establishments (whose beginnings are lost to us in the mists of the distant past) spoken of in language which the poor old damsels in the swamps had hardly thought of using. For, gradually, the life of the cloister had got to be a great deal more attractive than it had been, and a nunnery was no bad place for the widow or the rejected to make her home in; and a nun had become a personage, too, with the possibilities of a career before her, and many an old and ruined cloister rose up, as it were, from the dead—a phœnix that sprang from its own smouldering ashes, much more splendid than it had ever been before.

However, it was a long, long time before this little Crabhouse Nunnery rose to any importance or notoriety. Its original estate was a very insignificant little piece of property; the establishment just kept going, and that was all, and there is reason to believe that for some hundreds—actually

hundreds—of years it was little better than a refuge for poor women in their old age, who lived a life in community, and had some little difficulty in getting bed and board and such clothing as was needful for them, and doing very little but pray in the little chapel for themselves and their friends and benefactors.

Not much excitement in this kind of thing, my masters ! No ! Not at all for you and me ; but there are many employments which you and I should find horribly dull, and yet which have their charm for those who have, in a manner, been brought up to it. I should not, myself, like to be a waiter in an eating-house, or a needle-woman, even though I were full of orders perpetually. Yet I have no doubt there are members of those professions who feel a pride and pleasure—the one in putting an extra polish on the cruets, the other in clicking at the sewing-machine and fixing on the buttons with faultless precision.

## II.

I SAID it was a long time before the Nunnery of Crabhouse rose to any importance. I might have said it was a long time before it emerged from obscurity. It never became a great and showy one. It never could have been an attractive place. Kings were never its nursing fathers nor queens its nursing mothers. It grew slowly from generation to generation because the good women who lived there were really good women, and bore a good name and kept it, and lived to do good to other people, and the neighbours were grateful to the sisters and their prioresses. So, as time went on, little patches of land—here an acre, there a rood or two, sometimes a

breadth of *turbary*, whence they might dig turf for fuel, and sometimes a little meadow in which their cows were pastured—and now and then a little house and its garden—came into the hands of the nuns, and very slowly they began to thrive. We have actually a very minute register of their possessions, and in almost all cases we know the names of those from whom their lands and tenements were acquired.

It will surprise some of my readers to learn that, for a couple of centuries after the Conquest, there was hardly an acre came into their possession that they did not pay something for. It must be remembered that when the house once began to be well accounted of in the district round, there would be sure to be many gentlewomen who, for one reason or another, would be very glad to be admitted into the sisterhood and make their home among them. If some sad widow, or some single lady with no desire to marry and a great desire to live

a useful life, asked for admission, it is not to be supposed that she would be received without inquiry, and one of the first questions would have to be, “Can you contribute anything to the cost of your bed and board ?” As a rule, it went without saying that a candidate for a vacancy would be required to give some equivalent for the conveniences which she was desirous to secure for herself. At first she would be admitted on probation, but in any case the house must be secured from loss.

Hence, when a certain Henry de Wiggenhall found himself with a daughter on his hands who desired to live the life of religion among the nuns, he came to the prioress and made an offer. He made over four acres of land and the third part of “la terre turbarie sur Cuttedole,” and the land was conveyed to the convent “et le covent recurrent Julianne la fille avant dit Robert et la feseyent dame de la Meson et trouverait ce qui à lui appendit ;” which, being inter-

preted, means, they found her in bed and board and such things as a sister of the house was entitled to. Again, a little later, a gentleman hard by, named Roger Brunger, got admission for his daughter, and made over a house and two and a half acres of land in Tilney, “*et la couvente recurrent Johanne la fille avant dit Roger et la feseyent dame de la Mesun.*” And in the same way, Philippa, the daughter of Master William de Dunton, who had never had a husband and never wanted to wed, bought a little estate which lay very conveniently near the lands of the nunnery, and with it some other appurtenances, and “*devint sœur de la Mesun,*” and in the after time this little estate went by the name of Phelippescroft; and I take it, it was rather a considerable addition to the endowment of the house where Philippa found a home for her lifetime. This was in the year 1267 or 8, that is, in the fifty-second year of King Henry III.

But about twenty years later “a great stroke of luck,” as some folks call it, fell to the prioress and the sisters. There was a very great man, who lived not many miles off, at Rainham, and his name was Sir John de Ingoldesthorpe. He belonged to one of the most wealthy and influential families in Norfolk, and his brother [or cousin ?] was Bishop of Rochester ; and he had a daughter whose name was Beatrice. She, too, believed herself to have a vocation, or, perhaps, she had been educated at Crabhouse, and had conceived a strong desire to live as the good nuns lived and to be as they were. And Sir John and the Lady Ela, his wife, would not thwart the girl, and let her have her way. Such a young lady could not be allowed to come among her friends empty-handed, and accordingly Sir John made over to the convent quite a considerable little estate—lands and tenements and quit-rents, which are all set down in the register ; and on the day of

Sister Beatrice's admission there was a feast in the nunnery, and Beatrice had a brand-new nun's habit given her, not by the convent but by her father; "et Sire Johan avant dite donna pour son habite et pur sa feste cent souz." *Sous* means *solidos*, i.e., shillings, and it is not far from the truth to say that in the thirteenth century five pounds sterling would go as far as a hundred pounds will go now, when money is so abundant that the rich don't know what to do with it. So you see that Sir John did his part in the transaction in a free and open-handed way, and from the day that Beatrice became a nun at Crabhouse the affairs of the little community began to prosper, and the house began to get a high reputation. For human nature is always human nature, and when lonely widows and forlorn spinsters and young ladies of artistic and poetic temperament are looking about for a home, they prefer mixing with *good society*, and do not like to associate

with vulgar people who are “not nice !” And thus it came to pass that with the opening of the fourteenth century Crab-house evidently became quite a select and high-class and fashionable place of retirement, and ladies of some fortune were ambitious of being elected to the high and important position of prioress of the house, and they all brought something with them, and they all had the desire to advance the honour and glory of their own foundation, and to keep up its discipline, and economise its resources, with a view to making it a splendid place some day, if only it could be managed.

During the fourteenth century the nuns were steadily adding to their property. They must have been living very frugally and very strictly, for they were always buying up little bits of land that were lying round them, and every now and then making a shocking bad bargain. Thus when Agnes de Methwold was prioress

(A.D. 1315-1344) there was a certain Aleyn Brid who had a few patches of land lying conveniently near the nunnery, and he made an offer of it to the convent. But Aleyn was a shrewd man, and I guess he came to the prioress and pretended he was getting too old to cultivate that land, and he would be glad to be rid of it, and if only the prioress and her nuns would allow him and his wife maintenance for their joint and separate lives from the house, and firing, and a sum of money down, the nuns might have his lands and welcome. The bargain was struck and the lands made over ; but alack ! alack ! it seems as if Aleyn Brid and his wife had not the least intention of dying for many a long day, and like many annuitants before and since they went on obstinately living and getting their maintenance ; and the land turned out to be barren and useless, insomuch that the chronicler of the house, writing years afterwards, could not restrain her righteous indignation, but

breaks out into the remark, “When you come to look at it, gentles, land so dear and worth so little never was bought!”—*si cher terre de cy petit value unkes ne fut achate.*

The managing of the convent’s property, dotted about as it was in half a dozen neighbouring parishes, required some vigilance and business capacity. But the Crabhouse sisters seem to have always had a rather peculiar way of getting their work done. Instead of employing some needy factor who had an eye to his own interest first, and then—after an interval—some regard for the interest of his employers, they appear to have always employed one of their chaplains to be their agent, and it is surprising to see what enthusiastic and long-headed men some of these chaplains were.

I have already spoken of Aylmer, the chaplain, who evidently was a man of some property hereabouts, and though he gave back a great part of the lands which had belonged to the drowned nunnery in the

days of its distress, yet it seems that he kept back a great deal, which he handed on to his wife and children. In process of time this property, which comprehended a dwelling-house and other appurtenances, came into the hands of Henry Fitz Roger, a thriving Wiggenhall man, and he went on adding field to field till towards the end of the reign of King Edward I. he had got together more than a hundred acres lying round about the nunnery, and taking time by the forelock and not waiting till death should come upon him unawares and baffle all his plans, he made over all this estate, and gave it to the nuns as a separate estate, the income of which was to go for the support of a chaplain, who should perform the services in the convent church for ever, and not forget to offer up his prayers for the soul of the founder.

Now I daresay you may think that this endowment made the chaplain independent of the prioress, and that it was likely to

make him “put on parts,” as we say in Norfolk. Nothing of the kind ! I cannot stop to explain how it was exactly the contrary. But a chaplain was a stipendiary who might be much more easily dismissed than a beneficed clergyman can or ever could be, while on the other hand when the post fell vacant the prioress had rather a valuable piece of preferment in her hands, and not only was it obviously for the good of the house to get the best man she could find, but she was in a position to make such conditions as would lay some rather onerous duties upon the newly appointed functionary. The result was that, from time to time, a succession of head chaplains (for in such an establishment there were always necessarily two or three at least of these clergy employed in conducting the services in the church, which went on night and day) are to be met with at Crabhouse who were evidently men of considerable business ability, and who, moreover, were as evidently

animated by a strong *esprit de corps*. More than one of them added considerably to the possessions of the house, and bought land with his savings, and gave that land to enrich the nunnery.

Nothing succeeds like success, and by the time that Prioress Maud—who, I would have you note, was a Talbot, and so a lady of birth—resigned her office on St. Simon and St. Jude's day, 28th October, 1420, the nunnery had very many friends, far and near, who were all ready and willing and anxious to make a great effort, so that Crabhouse might begin to be reckoned as one of the grand places of the county, and raise up its head among the more splendid foundations of East Anglia. The nuns made choice of Joan de Wiggenhall as their new prioress, and she was installed accordingly, with all due pomp and ceremony, on St. Catherine's day following, that is on the 25th November. I take it that Prioress Joan was an heiress,

and, in fact, the last representative of the elder line of her family, and the nuns knew perfectly well what they were about when they chose a lady of birth and wealth, and highly connected to boot, to rule over them. They certainly were not disappointed in any expectations they may have formed. The new prioress set to work in earnest to make the nunnery into quite a new and imposing place, and her friends and kinsfolk rallied round her nobly.

The first thing Dame Joan did was to pull down a great barn “which was at the gate,” and I suppose much dilapidated ; and she built it up anew, and in the doing of this she got substantial aid from Sir John Ingoldesthorpe, whose ancestor had allowed his daughter to take the veil at Crabhouse a century or so before. Then she set to work to carry out some much-needed repairs and improvements in the conventional buildings. Then she got a kinsman of hers presented to the adjoining parish of Wiggenhall St.

Peter's, and this she did in order that she might work a reform in that poor neglected place.

For in King John's time the patron of that benefice had, with the connivance of the bishop of the diocese, alienated all the tithes of the place and made them over to a newly founded Gilbertine Priory at Shouldham (ten miles off as the crow flies), and left the wretched vicar to depend upon the voluntary offerings of his people for a maintenance. As usual the Gilbertines had taken all they could get and had done nothing in return ; and now, after a couple of centuries of neglect, the chancel of the church was a roofless ruin and a scandal to all beholders. Dame Joan made a strong appeal to the Prior of Shouldham, and being what she was, a great lady with a great following, she did not plead in vain. The chancel of Shouldham was rebuilt, Dame Joan paying one-third of the cost ; and to make things safe for the future she bound

the parish by indenture never to sell the lead from the roof and never to remove it except for repairs as long as time should last. Then she began in earnest upon her own church—the church of Crabhouse Nunnery. In the year 1423, “in the fourth year of the same Joan, prioress, for mischief that was on the church which might not be repaired, but if it were new made, with the counsel of her friends, did it take down, trusting to the help of our Lord and to the great charity of good Christian men . . . and she wrought thereupon three year and more continually, and made it.”

A very grand church it was, too, inside and out, and many thousand pounds as we reckon it now, did she spend, and there was quite a craze in the neighbourhood among the rich folk who gathered round her. There was William Harold, “that lieth in the chapel of our lady,” who “paid for the leading of the church”; and there was Richard Steynon, citizen of Norwich, who

gave freely of his substance in hard cash and left a great deal more, “which was withholden from us by untrue men his *sekatours*”; and there was John Lawson and Stephen Yorke and many another whose donations were large and liberal, though I do not put down the amounts, because, if I did, my readers would be inclined [from pure ignorance, Sir or Madam, pure ignorance!] to undervalue them and count them nothing so great after all.

But all this time by far the greatest contributor was a cousin of Dame Joan, whose name was Edmund Perys. He was rector of Watlington, a village just a mile from Crabhouse, but on the other side of the Ouse. He too was a rich man and a good one, and he caught the enthusiasm of Dame Joan, and he threw himself heart and soul into the work she had begun. He was so modest and retiring a man, and was so entirely of those who—

“Do good by stealth and blush to find it fame,”

that the simple chronicler shrinks from naming him more than once, and after that alludes to him in the most delicate way as if he had expressly desired to avoid publicity. She—the chronicler—speaks of him as “the person beforesaid,” and sometimes she is even more obscure in her mention of him and his good deeds. But that his contributions were upon a very large scale is plain. He found the stalls for the choir and the reredos, which cost him a huge sum; and he presented two Service Books for the church, called Antiphonaries, which were so splendidly illuminated and so gorgeously bound that they cost a sum at least equal to £200 of our money; and above all, he found the stained-glass windows, but on them he would not allow his name to be inscribed.

“ In the end of the work in the beginning of the seventh year of the occupation of the same Joan Prioress, the foresaid person passed to God on the Wednesday next

after the Conception of Our Lady," with many a prayer from the good nuns "that our Lord mote comfort his soul withouten End." In his will he ordered that he should be buried within the precincts of the nunnery, and I daresay one of these days the body-snatchers aforesaid will dig hereabouts and discover his tomb and desecrate it as is their wont. In the meantime better let the gentle cattle browse upon his grave.

It was in the year 1427 when "this good man beforesaid" died and was buried. He was hardly gone when "our Lord, that is full gracious to all his servants that have need and that trust in him, sent them another good friend them to help and comfort." He was a very considerable personage in his day, "and cosyn to the same Prioress," and his name was "Master John Wiggenhall, Doctor of Canon [Law]." He held several pieces of valuable preferment, and he was Vicar-General of the Bishop of Norwich, and many other things

besides. By his help Dame Joan may be said to have completed her work of making the Nunnery of Crabhouse into perhaps the most splendid of the smaller monasteries in East Anglia. She rebuilt the cloisters, the *dorter*, the tower of the church, and a great deal else that is duly and fully specified ; and all this time she was doing deeds of liberal charity of which the chronicler takes little or no note. But what follows has an eloquence of its own. For, “in the xix year of the same Prioress, fell a great dearth of corn ; wherefore she must needs have left work without relieving and help of some good creatures. So by the stirring of our Lord, Master John Wiggenhall, beforesaid, sent us of his charity an 100 coombs malt and an 100 coombs barley, and besides this procured us 20 marks.”

I have not told nearly all that might be told of Master John Wiggenhall, for my business is not with him but with the nunnery that he befriended so handsomely.

As for his kinswoman, Dame Joan, she died in 1451, and was succeeded by another lady of gentle lineage, Dame Margaret Daubeny; and she again by Dame Audrey Wulmer. And under these prioresses things appear to have prospered well; and the nunnery had always generous friends. But at last, just as the sixteenth century began, the nuns chose as their prioress one Elizabeth Bredon, and under her the discipline and all the old *prestige* passed away. What happened then and how it came about I do not care to tell, for it is not pleasant to speak of sad things which do not satisfy, for they are vain.

### III.

MY readers might think I had treated them unfairly if I did not take them to the end of my story ; and, moreover, one of the Philistines might take up the thread of my narrative and tie ugly knots in it, and end it off with cruel frays and tags and a crumpled kind of selvage, such as people are wont to leave who cobble at other folks' unfinished work. So I suppose I must go on with my story even to the bitter end—alas ! it is a bitter end.

Crabhouse Nunnery was in its glory in the days of the Prioress Joan. But I am really inclined to think that the beautiful house had become only too attractive by the time that her successor, Margaret Daubeney,

died, about the year 1470. Up to that time the Prioresses had been ladies of the best blood in East Anglia for more than a century and a half, and, as such, they would be sure to attract other members of the county families to take the veil under them, whose entrance fees would add to the resources of the establishment, and whose kith and kin would befriend it. Crabhouse Nunnery had a character to lose and a tradition to keep up and a name which all the countryside respected. But, as the fifteenth century was drawing to a close, young people began to think less of retiring from the world and hiding themselves in a cloister, than of yore.

In Norfolk there was a great deal of the leaven of *Lollardism* at work among the people, a great deal of inquiry and religious discussion, and a great many more questions and speculations stirring them than there had been hitherto. The country, more especially throughout East Anglia, was in a

very unsettled state. There was much violence and disorder and insecurity among some classes. The Universities were exercising a very profound influence upon others. Columbus had crossed the Atlantic and discovered a new world. In 1476 Caxton had set up his first printing-press at Westminster, and that, too, was the beginning of quite new things. Old things were passing away and the old order decaying. Just at this time there was a break in the traditions of the nunnery, and for some reason which has been left unexplained, the nuns elected as their prioress, about the year 1490, a lady who, as they say in Norfolk, had "come out of the shires," and her name was Elizabeth Breden. We know nothing of her except her name, and that name may stand for anything from Bruton to Breydon, for the wise men of the East please themselves about spelling the names of outsiders, and never spell them quite correctly if they can help it.

The new Prioress was evidently not “strong enough for the place.” Norfolk people are horribly clannish and exclusive, and any head of a Norfolk religious house, in the fifteenth century, who was not Norfolk born would be sure to have a very bad time of it. Prioress Elizabeth certainly had a bad time of it. It is fair enough to conjecture that the poor lady had some good qualities, some attractiveness, and, probably, some wealthy kinsfolk ; for all these things would be taken into consideration, and, other things being equal, it was right enough and natural enough that they should weigh with the nuns in making their choice of a new Prioress. But a large establishment, with conflicting interests among the members, with a crowd of old servants and dependents indulging in gossip and tittle-tattle, with a dozen ladies of all ages—querulous, self-willed, and yet requiring to be made submissive and tractable—with the routine of business claims employing fully the time

of the ruler — all these things call for administrative ability, wisdom, decision, and self-control, which are not to be found every day in combination in the same person.

The lady Elizabeth Breden was not the woman to keep things straight. She fretted, she fussed, she whimpered, she scolded, she shut herself up in her chamber, she went to church and prayed hard, but it would not do—not even that. It ended by the discipline of the house falling to pieces, and with the decay of discipline all sorts of serious laxity and soreness and wrangling and, at last, shame, came upon the once happy and prosperous convent.

You must understand that all the abbeys and priories, and all the monks and nuns in them, were subject to be *visited* by the bishop of the diocese in which they were situated at least once in every six years. This visitation was a very serious business—so serious and so much to be feared that the

larger and more important monasteries were continually attempting to become *exempt* from the episcopal visitation and to be free from all control and dictation of the bishops ; for the episcopal visitation was a scrutiny of the most searching kind. The bishop could not often carry it out in person, for a mediæval bishop was a very busy man, and the usual plan was for the bishop to be represented by his official, who came with a staff of chaplains and clerks and servants, and settled himself down in the monastery sometimes for a week at a time. All the accounts of the house were laid before him and duly audited. The church and monastic buildings were carefully examined by his surveyor. A minute inventory of the furniture, ornaments, plate, vestments, service-books, sacred vessels, and the like, was submitted to his inspection and compared with an earlier list which had been passed at the previous visitation. A report was placed before him of the con-

dition of the farm buildings, and the live and dead stock of the house, and all these documents were signed by the head of the house and the office-holders, or obedientiaries, as they were called, and the vouchers were taken away and deposited in the episcopal archives.

Then came the personal examination of the members of the community. All were assembled in the chapter-house, and each was interrogated separately (beginning with the head of the house) as to any complaints that he or she had to make, any breaches of discipline, any irregularity in the conduct of the religious services, any injustice done or insubordination shown ; above all, as to any grave offence against morals, or suspicious rumours that might be afloat affecting the character of any member of the body, and which could not be concealed without incurring the guilt of conniving at a crime against the whole society. The answers and informations given at these visitations were

all taken down by the sworn notary, and the formal report was kept in the bishop's registry. Hundreds of these *comporta*, as they were technically called, still exist in out-of-the-way nooks and corners, though very few have as yet been printed. When they are published they will give us incomparably the most minute and trustworthy picture of the inner life of the monasteries which can be found, and will show us that life at its worst, though, of course, not at its best.

A collection of these *comporta* for a large number of religious houses in the diocese of Norwich, was published by the Camden Society in 1888. Five visitations are there given, the earliest for the year 1492, the latest for 1532. That is, they cover the last forty years of the period during which the monasteries were subject to episcopal supervision and control. Beyond all doubt the religious houses in England during those years were in a condition of decay, morally,

religiously, intellectually, and financially, as compared with their condition one or two centuries before. How was it at Crabhouse ?

\*       \*       \*       \*

On Monday, the 10th day of June, 1514, the Rev. Thomas Hare, Doctor of Laws and Commissary of the Bishop of Norwich, entered upon his visitation of Crabhouse Nunnery and begun his examination. The Lady Elizabeth Breden, as Prioress, was first questioned. She evidently began by trying to shield her nuns and telling no tales. "The services were conducted as they ought to be ; the rules of the religious life were observed ; the accounts were well kept ; the buildings were in sufficient repair ; the debts were few and small. But, if the truth were to be told, there was one nun, Mary Stutfield by name, of a good Suffolk family, with whom nothing was to be done—she was incorrigibly disobedient to her Prioress !" Others were examined. Bit by bit the sad truth came out. The nuns began to recrimi-

nate on one another. The prioress was obviously wanting in tact, good sense, and firmness. There were quarrels and bickerings ; the juniors were habitually saucy to the seniors. The religious services were, indeed, regularly conducted by the chaplains, but the nuns were not looked after and were allowed to do as they pleased. One of them, Agnes Smith—must I tell the dreadful tale ?—had brought scandal and disgrace upon the house ; she had gone astray. Even the prioress, two of the nuns declared, had been lying when she said that the accounts were duly kept ; the truth was she had kept none, so they declared.

The visitation came to an end. Certain temporary injunctions were laid upon the prioress. The visitor went his way to present his report to the bishop. What followed we are not told, and I suppose we shall never know. I feel pretty sure that Dame Elizabeth Breden was compelled to resign her post, for at the next visitation, in

1520, her name does not appear, and Margery [not *Mary*, who was probably her sister] Stutfield, who had been sub-prioress on the previous occasion, had succeeded her as prioress. Then all things were going on well.

Dame Margery Stutfield was the last Prioress that ruled over Crabhouse. She must have held office for more than twenty years. From anything that appears to the contrary, she managed her house discreetly and honestly. But there was "a blot on the scutcheon," and the character of the nunnery had been lost.

The stigma in any case would have proved ruinous. There are some sins which society cannot afford to forgive and which no school or house for virtuous and devout women can safely endure. They bring their own punishment with them. Thus when the spoliation came and the plunderers were let loose upon the spoil, Crabhouse Nunnery was found to be a poor deserted place.

Mothers could no longer send their daughters there—devout and earnest ladies who were seeking a home to retire to in their age, avoided the place. When the Commissioners drew up the report, which they handed in to Henry VIII., in 1536, they found only four nuns in the house—though they add that the buildings were “in requisite reparaciones,” and of the poor ladies themselves they declare that “their name ys goode.” Twenty years had passed since the unhappy scandal, but from that day the nunnery had gone down. Under any circumstances it could hardly have recovered from its shame.

A year or so before this report of the Commissioners was drawn up the prioress of Crabhouse and her three or four sisters had seen that the days of their house must needs be few, and that it would not be long before they would be turned out of their pleasant home. Long before the blow fell upon the monasteries wise men and shrewd

women must have foreseen, and did foresee very clearly, that they were going to be turned adrift and robbed of their all ; and they that could do so prepared for the worst, and set themselves to save something from the wreck that was coming. The earliest invasion by the brutal ruffians who were sent out to pillage the smaller monasteries began in October, 1535. Already Dame Margery Stutfield and her nuns had managed to get rid of much of the convent's property. They had sold lands and movables before the Commissioners arrived, and though these gentlemen stopped some sales they did not get the plunder they expected to find at Crabhouse, and were very angry at their disappointment. Whereupon they revenged themselves a few months later by inventing hideous slanders against the poor ladies—slanders which the Commissioners, whose report has been already quoted, quietly but decisively contradicted when the truth was inquired into. But it seems that the prioress

of Crabhouse and her nuns managed very cleverly for themselves ; they stript their house of all the valuables—sold the cattle and farming stock, and then simply ran away and deserted the place without waiting to be driven out as others were.

When the bailiffs came to seize and sell all the movables there were no buyers ! It must have been a grim joke to the poor people in the neighbourhood, who for generations had been living upon the nunnery and were now friendless and beggared, to see the king's officers marching into the forsaken and desolate cloister, and finding little but the bare walls. However, they had come to hold a sale by auction, and a sale there was accordingly. Some church plate was delivered over to the receiver for the King—which was valued at £5 15s.—and a yeoman in the neighbourhood named Henry Webbe made a bid for all the live and dead stock and furniture that could be found. It was all knocked down

to him in a single lot, and he paid for "all the goods," the magnificent sum of nine pounds sterling. It was one of the few instances of the spoilers being outwitted by their victims in those bad times.

And this was the end of Crabhouse Nunnery. Not one stone remains upon another now of the beautiful church and costly buildings that rose up to heaven there some four hundred years ago. It has all passed away like the fabric of a vision. People who have lived on the site of the old conventional buildings all their lives can hardly point to the spot where the old nunnery stood, and know not that they are walking over the graves of the buried dead.

## *A COUNTRY COUSIN IN LONDON.*

*Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,  
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city  
square;  
Ah, such a life, such a life as one leads at the window  
there.*

*Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry !  
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who  
hurries by ;  
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the  
sun gets high ;  
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted  
properly.*

BROWNING.

### I.

EVERYBODY knows the look of the innocent rustic mooning about the streets and exhibitions of London in the month of May ; his weak and weary eyes, his generally limp and dazed appearance, his slow and perplexed movements, his frequent appeals to

the policeman, his benevolent expression of countenance, his oddly cut coat, his queer way of putting his feet to the ground, his exhaustion when he has reached four o'clock in the afternoon, his disappearance from the scene when the Row begins to empty, and the presumption that he retires to rest at nine to sleep off the fatigue of his long day, his reappearance early next morning at the Royal Academy, or the Water Colours, and all the rest of it. He is a pitiable object generally to the Londoner, who, however, treats him tenderly as an amusing, innocent creature, never likely to be noxious, and likely to repay civility by purring in a gurgling, gratified way of his own. It amuses us to receive this sort of patronage, which all classes in London bestow, and we never think of resenting it. We so entirely acquiesce in our position as belonging to the lower orders—*quâ* country bumpkins—that we are actually grateful for any recognition vouchsafed to us. As a rule, I come up to

London for about a week at a time, in May or June, and by the time the week is over I find I have had enough. This year I have been tempted to stay three whole weeks ; and my prolonged absence from the wilderness has made me meditative. I find myself looking at the world of London and Londoners with the eyes of a philosopher, and I am beginning to question myself as to what I have seen and what impressions have been made upon my mind — that foolish thing I call my mind, which I suppose we all have, or think we have.

The first observation that strikes me with a kind of awe when I am in London is that in the great city everything is changing at a pace which absolutely bewilders us rustics. The streets change ; the old landmarks change ; the people change ; the very climate is changing ; and nobody is at all put out by it, and nobody seems to care. I remember the shock that I felt—it seems only the other day—when I first discovered

that there was no longer any Temple Bar. But the removal of that fabric was a trifle to all that has gone on since. With us in the wilderness nothing changes. I trudge along many a road in this parish which I firmly believe—and I have reason for the belief—was a well-known trackway two thousand years ago at the least. There in the hedgerows stand the old pollards that must have known what “lopping and topping” was centuries before people burnt coal here in the east. There are the old landmarks, and the old “drifts” leading to the old queer-shaped fields, and the old *slums* at the edge of the common, where the squatters settled in the days of King Stephen or King John. There, too, are the old churches—restored or unrestored—standing where they have stood for many a long century, substantially the same, so patient—if I may say so—so dumb, and yet so eloquent. But in London I am always losing my way; looking out for the old

landmarks and finding them gone. The very stones on the pavement seem to be alive, restless, anxious to move on, looking out for something new. As for the old churches and the old schools, such as St. Paul's and Christ's Hospital, they are always on the march, and I am told it is the march of progress. I dare say it is. How should I know whether it is or is not ?

There is another fact which strikes me as I prowl about London, and that is that nobody I meet seems to be without money. We in the wilderness have no money, that's the naked fact ! Discount it as you may, you cannot whittle down that startling statement to anything less than this : that we in the country have no money to carry out improvements, great or small. We go on in the old way because we are all living horribly near the wind, and we can't help ourselves. The idea of paying half a crown for a cab in the country to take us home a mile or two when our knees are trembling

under us, never occurs to any but a most lavishly extravagant spendthrift. We are always practising small economies : we carry on our correspondence by the help of postcards ; we never forget that a shilling represents twelve pence ; we have a best coat and a second-best coat, and we cautiously look out at the front door before we start on our expeditions, deliberating whether it will be prudent to wear that new hat that is still shiny. It was almost frightful to see the reckless way in which a lad of sixteen or seventeen, who was sitting next me in a Knightsbridge omnibus the other day, put his hand in his pocket for the penny which was demanded, and brought out a whole handful of cash, and only a single copper coin in the whole hoard. Where did he get it from ? Had he come by it honestly ? After that, I watched other people, and again and again I witnessed the same phenomenon. Little girls carry purses, and they have all got some-

thing in them ; and they ask for change in the most *nonchalant* way, as if they had all been born, not only with a silver spoon in their mouths, but spangled over with diamonds and rubies, when they came into the world.

The natural consequences of all this amazing diffusion of wealth is that the *quality* of everything one sees or buys in London is immeasurably superior to that which we ever meet with in the country. Ever since I can remember anything, I have had a passion for horses. It makes me feel quite bad to watch the carriages in the streets and the parks. Take the first pair that meets you almost at any hour of the day, and you may safely say that those horses are a better pair than you will see in the wilderness once in three years. You simply can't buy such horses here in the wilds. You would actually have to send to London for them, if you even really determined to pay the price. And the same

is true of everything. It may happen that you take a pride in your tiny conservatory, and have a local reputation—very cheaply earned, it must be allowed—for “making things grow.” You go out to dinner, say in Kensington or Bloomsbury, and, lo ! there upon the table you are greeted with a display of flowers, incomparably more beautiful and more perfectly grown than you can ever hope to raise, while the mere mass of them is greater than your gardener could produce in a twelvemonth. You have had a new coat made expressly for that London trip, and your wife has had two gowns—I mean *dresses* : nobody wears *gowns* now except aldermen — and the trouble those garments have occasioned you in securing a fit has made you sensibly older. Before you have been many days *en évidence*, you are conscious that your rusticity has been only too apparent, and the “cut” and the “style” and the something or other about you have betrayed the country tailor or the

village *modiste*. We can't get *quality*. We can't get first-rate work in anything. We can't get our houses painted in London style. We can't get our very boots blacked with the London polish, nor (when we have any hair left) can we even get our hair cut scientifically or, indeed, decently, by rustic fingers and rustic scissors. But this is not all—not nearly all. I am more impressed by the improvement in the manners and appearance of the middle classes in London than by their mere prosperity. I notice it among men, women, and children. There has been a wonderful lift upward along the whole line. May I explain what I mean ?

## II.

THOUGH I did not say so in express terms, I think the readers of these papers will understand that I am writing as one of the middle class. We use that expression “middle class” very frequently, and yet few of us, if pushed for a definition of our meaning, would be prepared with an answer. I hold that the middle class is composed of all those who are not on visiting terms with the Houses of Parliament, and whose income counts by hundreds, not thousands, a year. The nobility and the Parliamentary families have many poor relations and connections, who, after a fashion, “hang on to their order by their eyelids,” but they are on the border-land, having the *entrée* to

some of the great houses, but little more ; and, on the other hand, when professional men and traders count their income by thousands they are by way of being admitted sooner or later to take their place among the upper ten. We of the middle class, however, are merely the *respectable* people, who do not pretend to live on terms of equality with the great folk. We do not grudge them the position they hold ; we have no envious feeling towards them. When admitted to their society, we have the good taste to like the region in which they move, and we do not find ourselves out of our element ; yet their ways are not our ways, and their world is not ours. On the other hand, we of the middle class have only kindly and generous feelings for the labourer and the artisan. If they can rise step by step in the social scale, we are not they who would hinder them. As long as they are the friends of order and are amassing that which gives stability to the commonwealth,

so long are they our friends : we and they have common interests, and that which is for their advantage is for ours also. Below them lies the proletariat and the residuum, and at the movements of this lower stratum some look with no little uneasiness and apprehension. Of this stratum I may at once confess that I know little or nothing. I have never laboured among the masses of the great towns ; therefore I do not presume to speak of them. I leave them to the specialists, who of late have taken them under their very equivocal protection, and who are laying down the law about them in a very dogmatical way.

The courtesy of the *bourgeoisie* in London strikes a countryman just fresh from the provinces as something which is apt almost to arouse his suspicion. I have more than once heard country folk remark upon it, as if they could not understand why a man who sold them a pair of gloves, or could not find some trumpery article in stock,

should take so much trouble and be “so kind about it. The gentleman didn’t know me, and he was as polite as if I had come in a carriage !” Now, I do not mean to say that our country shopkeepers are anything except very obliging, and ready at all times to show the utmost attention to their customers. So far from this, they are altogether unsparing of themselves, even to the humblest of their clients. But in the small circle of our country buyers and sellers we all know one another ; and just because we do know one another’s concerns there is a certain free and easy familiarity of tone in our dealings which the Londoner has quite banished. In the large shops—establishments I ought to say — of the Metropolis the assistants are all ladies and gentlemen. With us in the wilds they are all young persons. In a large shop in a certain town in Cornwall, the other day, I was much amused by the entrance of a very pleasantly dressed good lady, with whom

two of the assistants shook hands cordially before the inevitable question was put — “And what can I serve you with, Mrs. Trevince ?” Then commenced a cheery conversation, a merry consultation, a joke or two, a laugh, and all the rest of it. I, meanwhile, was engaged in trying on a cap which I was not at all anxious to carry off too hastily. I, too, engaged in conversation on things in general. Before I had left that shop, I had ingratiated myself with the keeper thereof and his family as a distinguished foreigner whose biography might be worth discovering. Next time they'd try again ! In London there is none of this undress familiarity. Those stately queens and princesses who try on your wife's mantle for her, they awe us rustics by their dignity and bearing ; they are so gracious, so beautiful—yes ! they really are astonishingly beautiful !—so perfectly self-possessed, and they never lose their tempers. It is amazing to notice the self-control of these

young women under provocations and irritations which would drive ordinary young women raving mad. The whole order of assistants in the London shops is a distinctly higher order than their representatives in the country. They have learnt the precious art of being habitually courteous. They have risen above mere familiarity of tone and manner, not to speak of rudeness, snappishness, and impertinence.

The same is observable, too, in the manners of every omnibus conductor, or cabman, or chance man in the streets of whom you ask your way. It is not that you meet with civility—meaning by that a tacit recognition on the part of the other that you are a gentleman—it is much more true that the other surprises you by showing that he himself has unconsciously become a gentleman. It is more than twenty years since I have had any dispute with a cabman in London, though I ride in cabs as often as most men when I am in the great city, and

you may be sure I don't foolishly overpay my fare if I know what it ought to be. But I remember the day when "cabby" was a very different creature from the well-spoken man he is now; and the "jarvey" of my childhood was not overdrawn in the early pages of "Pickwick." As to the London police officers, one has to remember the manners—or want of manners—of the same class in Germany and France to realise how great an advance we have made in England in graciousness over our Continental neighbours. In the country we have none of this courtesy; indeed, we have lost not only that servility—which was a bad sign, and which it was well should go—but in its place we have little or nothing that stands for that politeness which indicates true independence. The contrast between town and country is very marked, and it may be summed up briefly by saying that the townsman has been rising to self-respect; the countryman has only got as far as self-

assertion, and he shows no sign of getting any farther.

It is significant, however, to notice, what must have struck many others besides myself, that this advance in courtesy is much more marked among the young men than among the young women. The girls in some employments are inclined to be saucy, free and easy, and airified. Domestic servants in London, I observe, are beginning to drop the "Sir" or "Ma'am" which used to be general among us. Girls in the post offices and the telegraph offices are much less pleasant people to deal with than the lads ; and I am told that young women who have only lately risen to the consciousness of having won their "rights" are exhibiting somewhat too much of the self-assertion and too little of the self-respect. I have seen signs of this more than once ; but I should be glad to find, on further inquiry, that my impression was a wrong one. Meanwhile, my admiration for the

London boy is unbounded. I am old enough to remember when Mr. MacGregor first started the Shoeblack Brigade, and the ridicule that came from certain quarters upon that brave experiment. Then it was said by not a few that only failure was to be expected from a Quixotic attempt to make the young ragamuffins in London give an account of their daily earnings. Now we are almost all convinced that you may do anything with and make anything out of the London boy.

### III.

THE most repulsive subject that English people discuss is the subject of education. There is nothing to compare with it for the amount of nonsense which they talk about it; none that seems to bring out such inconsequential theories; none that tempts men to dogmatise so idiotically. The very smallest part of a human being's education is that which is carried on at school, and yet, from "my lords" downwards, we English folk seem to have no other notion than that the moment a lad passes out from the school for the last time his education is complete. It is much nearer the truth to say that not till then does the real education of life begin. The opportunities, the facilities, the means and appliances for building

up the average London boy into a manly, rational creature are truly wonderful. There was a time, not so long ago, when the street-boy was a standing nuisance because he had nothing to do. Look at him now ! Standing at the door of a certain hotel not a thousand miles from the Strand, I have seen a string of four or five telegraph boys file past me more than once or twice—coming from I know not whence and going I know not whither—scrupulously neat and clean in their dress, upright as darts, steady as old horses, lithe and quick as antelopes, and, withal, joyous as kittens at play. I have seen them hurrying by, talking as fast as their tongues could move, never a sign or sound that was boisterous or unmannerly. Watch the little shoeblocks with their brushes and their blacking. See the concentration of thought, the fixity of purpose which they display, the determination to get the highest possible polish on that damp boot, the critical look at your trousers as

they turn them up, the satisfaction they feel in the completeness of their last effort, and then the briskness of their movements as they spring upon the next customer ! You may come upon a little gathering of them sometimes in the dull time of the day, sprawling, and discussing the last murder. Next moment they are all alert and wide-awake, all offering themselves ; never disputing if you select one of them, whichever it may be. I am sorry to notice that they have given up whistling, to a great extent. Life has begun for them, and whistling seems to be considered inconsistent with serious employment. Happily, however, they have not given up singing, and the style of music and song is a huge improvement upon the melodies and the subject-matter of the lyrics we used to hear when I was a lad. One evening in the merry month of May I found myself at a station of the Underground Railway when my train was not due for twenty minutes.

There were two boys at the bookstall ; they were in the best possible spirits ; one began to sing a song, the other at once broke in with singing as true and distinct a second as any choir-master could desire to listen to ; and the next moment, from the other side of the line, a third boy, whose voice was not yet broken, growled out an attempt at a bass. He broke down hopelessly, and the laughter of all the three boys at the failure was so fresh and gay and hearty that I wished I could be a boy again, or that I had had such a chance as these youngsters had in their day. I do not think it is possible to over-estimate the prodigious improvement that has been effected upon Young London by the now general employment of young boys in the various occupations which, a generation back, it was assumed could only be safely entrusted to adults. When the present librarian of the Bodleian entered upon his office, one of the earliest of his reforms was largely to increase

the staff of assistants by introducing boys into the library. I believe the experiment has proved a complete success, and I doubt not it will be followed elsewhere by and by. You may talk as you please about night-schools and lectures and classes. What are these mechanical contrivances for turning boys into bookworms and prigs in comparison with the discipline of the streets, carried on every hour of the day, under a sense of responsibility and with the consciousness of belonging to the great living machinery of society—yes ! and the conviction that you are helping to keep it going ?

One of the most memorable evenings that I ever spent was at a boys' club at Toynbee Hall. We had turned out from the gymnasium, where the lads were performing all sorts of dreadful and alarming gyrations, and we were by special favour admitted to this meeting. If I am not mistaken, the chairman was a lad of twenty, just on the verge of becoming superannuated. I have

never seen any man in my life conduct the business with more dignity, courtesy, or good sense. One boy, who was in his shirt sleeves, was inclined to rebel against authority. The quiet way in which that young chairman put him down, and the cordial support which the chair received, was marvellous. As for us, who were but lookers-on, and admitted only on sufferance, we were as completely ignored as if we had been men in the moon. Think of the silent but profound and far-reaching influence which a discipline and training like this must needs be exercising upon those to whom it extends directly and indirectly! Think, too, of the magnificent work that has been going on at the Polytechnic under such an heroic and enlightened philanthropist as Mr. Quinton Hogg! Think of all the boys' clubs and young men's institutions which they tell me are to be found in all parts of London, affording rational amusement and recreation for mere lads — the

cricket, the juvenile bands, the choirs—and you will not doubt that these things must be working a change in the whole bearing of young Londoners which you, who have been living in it all along, are hardly, if at all, conscious of, but which proves to us, the occasional visitors, that a great social revolution has been carried out without our knowing how—a revolution whereby the rising generation of Londoners has been lifted up to a moral and intellectual level which their grandfathers, half a century ago, conceived to be impossible of attainment by their progeny in their own lifetime.

If my old friend X were now alive, he would be some years past seventy. He was a man who had made his own way in the world, after a fashion, and he was rather fond of talking to me of his early struggles. He was one of, I think, seven sons of a law stationer in the purlieus of the Inns of Court, and at fifteen he was thrown upon his own resources. A warehouseman in

the City took him as a supernumerary in his business—more as an act of charity than with any hope of finding him of much use. He had a salary of £30 a year, and he lived upon it, without a shilling from his parents. His mother engaged a garret for him in Clifford's Inn, for which he paid £4 a year ; and she started him with bed and bedding and the barest necessaries in the way of furniture. An old woman came in once a day to “tidy up.” He told me that for the first year he never had a fire in his room. He got to know where the biggest cup of coffee and the biggest roll could be got for a penny, and where the cheapest beef *& la mode* was to be found for his make-shift dinner. He left the warehouse at seven or eight o'clock in the evening ; then he walked the streets, and sometimes took refuge in a small coffee-house as near the fire as he could get, and regaled himself with a supper of more coffee, and now and then with the luxury of a muffin. He never could have

been a strong boy, and I believe his constitution was permanently weakened by his early privations. At the end of his first year his salary was raised to £40, and he bought his first greatcoat. "I can tell you that *was* a day when I put that greatcoat on!" he said, as he looked back upon that great event in his history. But during three or four years of this lonely and desolate life he assured me that he had absolutely no amusement of any kind, except such as he sought and found at the theatres. Poor as he was, and frugal and self-denying, he discovered that recreation of some sort he *must* have, and accordingly he went to the vast expense of providing himself with three season tickets of admission to the gallery of the Adelphi and two other playhouses—I forget which. He paid a guinea for each ticket. All this was going on not much more than fifty years ago. Contrast the life of a poor lad like this with that which boys of the same age lead in London now! It is

a contrast between a daily round of half-starved misery—anxious, monotonous, and desolate—and a life of gaiety, excitement, congenial society, and elevating influences on the right hand and on the left, which cannot but be fruitful in grand results for the boys of to-day who will be the men of to-morrow.

## *THE DYING OUT OF THE MAR- VELLOUS.*

*But there's a tree, of many one,  
A single field which I have look'd upon,  
Both of them speak of something that is gone ;  
The pansy at my feet  
Doth the same tale repeat ;  
Whither is fled the visionary gleam ?  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream ?*

WORDSWORTH.

MR. CADAVEROUS has left me a legacy. The good man is dead, but he has left me his note-books. This morning I opened one of them, and found it full of ghost stories. There was a note, written in Greek and Latin, on the last page, which, being interpreted, says : " Of all that comes before this page I believe not one single word." I was angered as I read, for why should any man collect a mass of narratives which he looks

upon not as mere fiction but as mere lies ? This arid scepticism makes me hate my generation. What would Sir Thomas Brown have said to it if he had been so unlucky as to live in our time ? I turned for relief to a veracious chronicler of the fourteenth century, who has painfully got together all he could find about the reign of King Richard II., and who has, in point of fact, left us about the best *résumé* of the years between 1393 and 1404 which any contemporary writer has handed down to us, and straightway I found myself breathing a purer air.<sup>1</sup> A fig for men and women who brag of what they do *not* believe ! As Bishop Blougram says, “What can I gain on the denying side ?” If a man can’t see, we pity him because he’s blind. If he can’t hear, we commiserate with him because he’s deaf. If he can’t tell tea from coffee—not to speak of port from sherry—we take

<sup>1</sup> “Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti, Regum Angliae in Joh. de Trokelow’s Chronica,” &c. Edited by S. H. Riley. Rolls Series, 1866.

good care to waste no good liquor upon him. But if he can't believe because he cannot imagine anything that he cannot handle, what shall we say of him but that he is an intellectual cripple? I had a boy in my house once who was born with only one arm. He used to say he should not like to be "one of those fellows with a *second arm* lolling about at his side." He could not understand what a man could do with two arms. If a man *has* only one arm, by all means let him make the best of it. But bragging of it—well! he'd better let that alone. Give me the man who can believe *anything*. There's some hope that he will end with a balance of ascertained certainty to his credit when he is beginning to crave less for proof than conviction and assurance.

Accordingly I love my old chronicler. He lived in days when people were not perpetually asking, "But is it true?" "Of course it's true. Do you suppose I should

tell it you if it weren't? It would not be worth my while. Invent? We chroniclers never invent; we tell our tale and leave it. The age of invention will come some day. What a stupid, dull, matter-of-fact age it will be!" My chronicler embellishes nothing—he tells a simple, unvarnished tale. Rather he has a host of marvellous tales, none the less matters of fact.

In those eleven years which my chronicler deals with he gives us no less than fifteen marvellous stories of strange experiences which claimed to be set down in his veracious history. Would you like some specimens? Then take them as they come!

In the year 1397, says he, about the season of Lent, in a village near the town of Bedford, every evening as the sun went down, a ghostly female took to wandering about. She frequented the house of a certain widow, and she announced herself to be the widow's daughter. She declared that the widow was sure to be damned. She

had buried her baby offspring in the garden behind the house, and it was all the mother's fault that the babe was born dead. So said the ghost. An animated dialogue took place between the mother and the phantom. Said the mother : "I shall not be damned, for I confessed my sin to a priest, and he gave me absolution." Said the ghost : "Mother, thou liest ! and damned thou shalt be for thy sin !" Undismayed the mother made answer : "Nay ! thou art a lying spirit, that wouldst fain drive me to despair. Avaunt !" The chronicler assures us that this wrangling went on between the living and the dead very often—"fit sæpius contentio inter eos"—and inasmuch as the mother stood firm, the ghost changed its tactics. The widow had a son, and he was a priest ; but he was a worldly priest, and extravagantly fond of hunting. The phantom made an attack upon this priest, whose name (says my chronicler) was John Hervy. The spirit gave the parson no rest—day and

night coming to him ; told him he read his matins vilely, and as for his saying of the Mass, it was just shocking bad (*pessime*). John Hervy didn't care a straw, and, in fact, the ghost and the whole family got, at last, to be on such astonishingly intimate terms that the very servants used to put the ghost to proof, and made her say after them the Lord's Prayer and the Ave Maria, and even the very Creed and the first verse of the Gospel of St. John. All which the aforesaid ghost repeated without hesitation or stumbling. But there was one prayer which began with the words "O Jesus of Nazareth." It was an English prayer, by good luck, and then it looked as if the ghost could not manage that. It stammered and bungled and could not pronounce English ; *that* was plain. But in process of time the spirit got over even that difficulty, and managed, it seems, to repeat anything that was put to it. For the thing went on, says my chronicler, for three

years ; and then the ghost grew malicious and mischievous : it took to rattling the pots and pans and doing other naughty things. Finally the ghost began to upset the great jugs of beer when they were full, and there was no knowing what might come next. . . . So. . . . Alack ! there is no end to the story. My author does not pursue the subject, but in the most tantalising way leaves us to imagine the rest.

Two years after this there came a horrible portent, which disturbed men's minds exceedingly. It came to pass that in this year 1399, of a sudden all over England the laurels shrivelled up, and then, to the wonder of mankind, after they had all lost their leaves they grew green and fresh again—not everywhere, we are told—that was not to be expected—but *in many places* they recovered ; that, at any rate, was cheering. People were awestruck, of course. What could it mean ? Verily it meant this. Had not the king of late brought many of the

nobility to shame—thrown them into prison, banished them—what not ? They would be restored by and by—never fear ! Never fear ! The laurels would come back and be green again ! I suspect that the withering of the laurels was in the winter time, for my chronicler says that in the spring—even during the season of Lent—a certain holy hermit, William Norham by name, presented himself before the Archbishop of Canterbury, solemnly declaring that he had a message “from Him it was not safe to disobey,” which he had to deliver to the king and his great ones. Strange to say, the archbishop brought him to the king. “If,” said King Richard, “you are on such intimate terms with God Almighty, go and walk barefoot on yonder water, and then we shall know whether you’re a true messenger !” The hermit was equal to the occasion. “I profess to do no miracles. I leave that to my betters. Nevertheless, I warn thee, O King, that thou scorn not my

message, or woe to thee and thine!" So spake the hermit; but the king threw him into gaol, and there he lay for four long years, during which time all the evils that he had prophesied came to pass. But when they let him out, and Henry IV. was on the throne, the wretched man tried the same little game a second time. This time he did not fare so well, for King Henry laid his hands upon him at York and hanged him for a rogue; though, says my authority, he was beyond doubt a holy man, for his hair shirt had actually eaten into his flesh, and he had never worn shoes upon his feet for many years, except when he said his Mass; and he had made a pilgrimage to Rome too, and flesh meat had never entered his mouth for years and years, and yet they hanged him for a traitor. Oh! the pity of it!

You must not expect that I should tell you all my chronicler's stories. No! I must leave out the story of the devil of Danbury; and I cannot stop to explain

how that awful prophecy came true which frightened the king so much—as well it might—

“ Scarce two years on  
Will last the pomp of John ! ”

Nor may I tell about the hobgoblins that kept up an infernal battle in the neighbourhood of Biggleswade. Indeed, I can only give you a taste of the many good things that are ready to hand, but I positively must add a word about the dragon of Sudbury. There can be no sort of doubt about that dragon. He appeared in the year 1405, and he took possession of a portion of Sir Richard de Waldegrave's property, and that same property (Bures) belongs to his descendants to this day, so it must be true. The people turned out in force against that dragon—yea, all the servants of Sir Richard. But the darts that were hurled against him rebounded, says my chronicler, as if they had been hurled at a hard rock, and the arrows that hit the spine of his back (*spinam*

*dorsi*) went flying away from it in awful fashion, and they gave it up for a while. At last the whole country turned out to slay that dragon ; but when the dragon saw that he was going to be attacked in earnest, being a wary dragon, he betook himself to a swamp or lake thereabout—I daresay it's there now—and he went and hid himself in the reeds, and he never more was seen. What a dreary, monotonous, uneventful age we live in ! We have sneered the ghosts and dragons away. We feed our children upon grammar and the multiplication table. Yet there are wonders still if we had but eyes to see them.

## *CLOCKS AND WATCHES.*

*. . . like a German clock,  
Still a-repairing ; ever out of frame ;  
And never going aright, being a watch,  
But being watch'd that it may still go right.*

LOVE'S LABOUR LOST.

AN excellent worthy, some years ago, presented to the parish of which I have the honour to be rector a secondhand clock, which has been ticking intermittently ever since in the church tower. It was a generous gift, and the people are proud of the ancient timepiece. We are not of those who look a gift-horse in the mouth, and it is not every parish that has a clock which strikes the hours and has some pretension to keep the time when it is duly watched and wound up and treated with

loyal deference. We do not expect too much of our clock. It is a thing to boast of, even though it be not exactly a thing of beauty ; it has its own way of going and its own way of stopping too, and is entirely to be depended on for one thing—and that is for not being too rigidly uniform in its habits. In fact, our clock is a wayward clock ; it prides itself on not being as other clocks are. Fifty times a day do fond eyes gaze at it, and the passers-by on the road to the nearest market town may often be heard exclaiming with a glad surprise, “Why ! that clock’s a-going to-day,” and then they pull out their watches and compare notes.

When our benefactor gave us that clock another excellent worthy presented us with a sundial, and fixed it up with carefully calculated precision upon the south porch. It is an admirable dial, exact, unpretentious, silent as the grave, faultless, and absolutely to be trusted ; yet—such is the perversity of human nature—I never saw a human being

turn his eyes to that sundial except he was one that I had taken the pains to show it to and bid him look at it. Nobody cares for it, nobody respects it, nobody consults it, nobody believes it to be of the slightest use or admires it as an ornament. Why is this ?

There is something in the nature of all of us which makes perfection appear insipid. It is irritating to find in anything no margin of error. In proportion as we eliminate the "personal equation," in that proportion we are face to face with mere mechanism. Never to make mistakes is the characteristic of the low man. You may find a million knaves who in the course of their lives were never known to be wrong in adding up miles of figures. They are worth so many pounds a year to any haberdasher in the New Cut.

That is all they are fit for. "Seven pieces of tape at five farthings a piece; three ha'p'orth of pins from a twopenny box; half a card of hooks and eyes at threepence a

card, with five hooks and seven eyes short; a pair of braces a trifle soiled at tenpence for three pairs, and two-and-a-half per cent. discount off the total for ready money. How much?" The man will tell you in a twinkling, he's as true as my sundial! Do you love him? Not you! You'd as soon lose your heart to a pair of pincers. But you *do* get very fond of your watch, especially if it varies. You take it out much more often to find how *wrong* it is than to find out the time of day. When it stops without rhyme or reason you shake it, and it probably thinks better of it and languidly consents to go for a little while longer; next day it starts off at a full gallop, and you find it has gained five minutes in twelve hours. That's a watch of some character, that is! But suppose all watches went like chronometers, who would carry one? The monotony of all men's watches saying exactly the same thing at every moment of the day or night would be sickening. I knew a

man once who had a large collection of watches. They dated from fabulous ages, they came from distant lands, they included that famous “repeater” which the boatswain in “Peter Simple” was so proud of. One had been dented by a bullet at Waterloo ; another had been cut out of a shark which had swallowed it in a sailor’s breeches-pocket ; and a lot of seven had been bought as a bargain of a mysterious villain who was suspected of having abstracted them from a pawnbroker’s window. I asked my friend one day how many he had. “Sixty-two in all !” was the reply. “I wound them all up yesterday, and so I happen to know !” “Wound them up ?—do you mean to say they all go ?” His contemptuous astonishment was chilling. “Why, my good man, what do you suppose they were made for ?” To say the truth, I had never looked at the matter in that light. It appeared, however, in pursuing my inquiries, that some of these articles did *not* go, for the sufficient reason

that their mainsprings were broken ; but the rest did actually begin to tick when the key was removed, and continued ticking audibly for very various periods. He took careful notes and showed them to me. The "shark" kept on for nearly an hour, some persisted only for five or six minutes, some for half a day ; but the prize of patient continuance was won by a plump little veteran, with a tortoiseshell case and a pretty little portrait of Charles I. inside it, certainly more than two hundred years old. This old relic actually went on for twenty-two hours. Surprised into unwonted activity after a sleep of centuries, it could not have enough of the joy of being awake again. For myself, I never in my life had a watch I could depend upon, but I only half regret the fact. I seldom miss a train, for I can always *calculate* what o'clock it is by making due allowances. Of course my watch plays tricks ; so do my dogs, but it does not hurt me and it amuses them. I bear no malice

to the one or the other—they are, each in his own sphere, interesting organisms. That I do not occasionally, in my weak and foolish moments, covet a better article to compare with my neighbour's sumptuous productions, is more than I can say, for pride *will* tempt us all at times, and no man likes to be jeered at for his "turnip." But there are clocks and watches that I would rather have as my own than the best that Dent ever dreamt of, though they should be jewelled in a hundred holes—such as that clock that the late Principal of Brasenose College showed me lovingly some twenty years ago. It was made to go on for a hundred years without winding. When I saw it, it was solemnly swinging its long pendulum and keeping admirable time, as it had done, if I mistake not, for some ten or twelve years already. I hope it is still going on—bearing witness to the shortness of human life and the length of clock life. Was it this clock, or was it another, that

kept note of all the changes of the calendar, and, when a leap year occurred, duly chronicled February 29? But of all the watches that ever were, the most precious to me, if it could be recovered from the ruthless hands of the destroyers, would be Doctor Donne's watch, which he left by will to his "very worthy friend and kind brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Grymes," describing it as "that *striking clock* which I ordinarily wear." To think of holding that in one's hand! It rested once near the great dean's heart—it answered to the pulses that were beating there. When he died it grew cold. What a life that watch must have led! What a joy to the little children when he drew it forth and made it strike the hours. Perhaps Shakespeare saw it, heard it, handled it; for was not Donne a "great lover of plays," as Ben Jonson testified of him? But who cares for Donne now? Alas! hero-worship is sorely on the decline. We adore the moderns and their new devices,

and we bargain that our engine-turned play-things shall be up to the last fashion ; and now our maidens must wear their watches on their wrists, and defy the tennis balls. And the moral of it all—what is the moral ? “Madam,” said Coleridge to the serious lady who inquired for the moral in “The Ancient Mariner”—“Madam, I never knew it had a moral.”

## *THE PHENOMENA OF DOUBLES.*

HISTORY is rich in examples of the same discovery having been made simultaneously by two or more great thinkers working in ignorance of each other's researches. Whether the modern theory of Natural Selection was first struck out by Mr. Wallace or Mr. Darwin is still, I am told, a matter of doubt among the learned ; but there can be no doubt that Le Verrier in France and Professor Adams at Cambridge were both engaged in calculating the orbit of the planet Neptune for years before the world had any suspicion of its existence, neither of them knowing that any one else was

engaged upon the same problem. I wonder why nobody has ever written a book—perhaps somebody has—on the romance of scientific discovery, and given us a chapter upon this most curious—I am almost tempted to say this mysterious—subject.

I have often thought that among the curiosities of literature there is something akin to this simultaneity in scientific discovery observable in the simultaneous appearance of two great men *bearing the same name*, who made their mark in their generation while engaged in the same sphere of labour. I confess to a certain degree of irritation, while reading Professor Stokes's book on "Ireland and the Celtic Church" some weeks ago, to find that most learned and acute scholar making out a painfully distinct story of the life of St. Patrick. I was perfectly happy as long as I could solace myself with the belief that there were two Patricks in Ireland during the fifth century—two, and only two. And as for

Dr. Petrie's theory of there having been seven, it was easy to reject that as a monstrous hypothesis ; but to be put off with one is to be robbed of an illustrious pair of saints whose co-existence—as long as it could be accepted—would lend material support to a beautiful theory. It seems, however, that I need not surrender my belief, for the Professor thinks it necessary to admit that there may have been easily *three* St. Patricks at work in Ireland during the fifth and sixth centuries. If there *may* have been three, I hold that there *must* have been two.

It is quite certain that there were two Saints Columba or Columban alive at the same time in the sixth century. They were not akin to one another, though both were Irishmen. Both were “Seekers after God,” both were ardent missionaries, both were the originators of a new form of the religious life—the one may be said to have been the founder of Scottish monachism, which had a

character of its own ; the other was the founder of the new Burgundian monachism, which continued to flourish for the best part of a century among the fastnesses of the Vosges till the more popular and less stringent rule of St. Benedict superseded the Columban *régime*. It is hardly probable that the two saints should not have met and conferred with one another, but each had a line of his own and each followed his own course independently.

I have not kept pace with the new researches that have been made into the life and labours of John Wycliffe during the last few years ; but, again, it is certain that there were two John Wycliffes at Oxford at the same time ; and as it appears that we have to account for a fellowship at Merton and another at Balliol, a rectory at Fylingham in Lincolnshire and another at Lutterworth, and the headship of Balliol and Canterbury Colleges, all which were held by one or more John Wycliffe in the course of a dozen

or fifteen years, some of us would find it hard to believe that there were less than two contemporary bearers of the name at Oxford, men of mark in the University, and working either in association or in rivalry.

Pass over another century or two, and we come upon two great scholars at Cambridge, both bearing the name John Boys. They were both distinguished academics, both fellows of colleges at the same time; the elder was one of the translators of the Bible, while the other was distinguishing himself as a prominent divine and a preacher at Paul's Cross and elsewhere; and within five years one was made Prebendary of Ely, and the other Dean of Canterbury. As a matter of course, the two have been confused by incautious historians, and are not unlikely to be confounded with one another again. But the most curious instance that occurs to me of the simultaneous activity of two men bearing the same name in the world of literature is that afforded by what some-

body has called the “Battle of the Keys,” in the sixteenth century. When Queen Elizabeth paid her famous visit to Cambridge in 1564, the Public Orator of the time regaled her Majesty with the usual oration, in which he maintained that Cambridge was a seat of learning which could boast of a greater antiquity than any other University in the land. The Oxford men were offended and indignant. When the arrogant claims of the Cantabs was reported to one Thomas Caius—Master of University College, Oxford—he then and there sat down and wrote a dissertation maintaining the contrary position—to wit, that the University of Oxford was a far more ancient institution than her sister on the Granta. But Cambridge, too, could boast of a champion bearing the name of Caius—though his name was John and the other's name was Thomas. John Caius set himself to confute Thomas Caius, and to it they went, hammer and tongs. Each had his supporters and

partisans, and there was a great deal of strong language and a great deal of strong feeling, and the followers of one Caius called the followers of the other Caius all the hard names they could find, and there was, you may be sure, no love lost between them. But the curious point of the story is that there should be two men in the world who bore the name of Key at all, and who, bearing it, as they both did, should simultaneously take it into their heads to adopt the same Latinised form, which has nothing to do with the meaning of the English word. They were strictly contemporaries ; they were probably born and certainly died within a year of one another. They were not allied by blood : one was a Yorkshire, the other a Norfolk man. They were both suspected of being ill-affected towards the doctrines of the Reformation ; they were both masters of colleges in their respective Universities ; the one was buried at Oxford in May, 1572, the other at Cambridge in July, 1573. There

is no reason to believe that these two men ever met or ever held intercourse with one another for an hour.

Now, if we had been dealing with members of the only too prolific stock of the Browns or the Smiths or the Robinsons, it might have been easy to adduce numberless instances of famous or notorious *couples* alive at the same time in the history of each of those families. The other day I counted in Gore's Directory more than six hundred bearers of the name of John Jones who were actual householders at Liverpool in 1885. We have only to bear in mind that Jones and Evans are but the two different forms of the same name, and corruptions of what we now call John and the Greeks called Johannes, to find ourselves with a practically inexhaustible fund of material, from which we may construct any theories we please to adopt with regard to the illustrious house of Jones. Have we not Johns and Jones, and Iwans and Evans, and innumerable other

variants at our command ? A practised sophist might do what he pleased with such a bank to draw from. But Boys and Wickliffe and Caius are at least unusual names, and yet here are these double stars, as we may call them, suddenly appearing in the firmament, revolving round each other with grotesque pirouetting, each casting upon the other a measure of illumination or obscuration according as we change our points of view.

Is not this a subject that deserves serious examination, my brothers ? Let us look into it. Let us found a society for collecting and recording illustrative facts. The study of the occult sciences is reviving. Here we have a chapter, it may be, of a solemn and pregnant *opus magnum* which only waits to be written. In the revelations of the future the phenomena of doubles cannot but find a place of prominence.

## *DREAMS.*

*Night is the time for dreams,  
The gay romance of life.  
When truth that is and truth that seems  
Blend in fantastic strife.  
Ah ! visions less beguiling far  
Than waking dreams by daylight are.*

THEY tell me that in the libraries at Nineveh and elsewhere among the ruined cities of Mesopotamia there is an enormous literature of dream-books. Everybody was a dreamer among those Babylonians and Assyrians. Men laid themselves down to sleep with the full intention of making a night of it. They gave themselves up to the luxury of seeing sights and hearing sounds which in their waking hours they could not apprehend : the body reposed, the soul went on its

travels to the spiritual world. The Chaldean sage was an interpreter of dreams ; he was that or nothing. Gentle and simple dream profusely, and gentle and simple went to the interpreter to be told what their dreams meant and what they portended. Interpretation of the nightly visions began with empiricism—as every science does. It developed into one of the recognised sciences. It had its axioms, its postulates, its laws, its method, and doubtless it had a calculus of its own. So rich, I am told, is the literature of this science that one of these days we may expect that it will be revived. Beware how you trust to the Gospel of Education to rid you of credulity ! Athens swarmed with dreamers, who brought their dreams to the professors of the art of explaining them. The *Oneirocritica* of Artemidorus has come down to us, and has been learnedly edited more than once ; the author was a physician, and his work, in five books, gives us the result of many years of study and research in an age

which was by no means barren of culture. Moreover, Artemidorus was not only a learned man and a great traveller, but he was a religious man too, according to his lights, and he solemnly declares that he had a divine mission to write his book on the interpretation of dreams. But he was of yesterday as compared with those Chaldean masters who stabbed their cuneiform lore into the Mesopotamian clay and then sent it to the baker to make into those imperishable tablets. Mr. Cadaverous, who was rather audacious in his views of history, though always reverent, as a man of his temperament could not help being, used to give it as his opinion that when Abraham went forth from Ur of the Chaldees he carried with him some of the mystic lore which he could not but have learnt in the home of his father, Terah ; and he was wont to say that the patriarchs were all dreamers, their “unconscious cerebration” having been stimulated by long cultivation of the

hypnotic faculty through many generations. He used to instance the case of Joseph as proving that the art of dream-interpretation had not been lost in the patriarchal age, though, he added, it was not until the return to Babylon that we read of any great attention having been bestowed upon the antiquated science. Of course I am not responsible for any opinions expressed by Mr. Cadaverous.

Fifty years ago my father had a groom who was much exercised in his mind on the subject of dreams. He was not a very estimable fellow, and I am afraid he did not teach me much good. He had a small collection of dream-books. Where he got them from I know not, but many a time and oft have I sneaked into the harness-room to pore over those books, and with the omnivorousness (what a beautiful word !) of youth I eagerly devoured them. Alas ! I remember little more than the look of them now, but my flesh used very much to creep at one

dream which was set down with a horrible vividness. It was the dream of an unhappy visionary who, as he slept, beheld two enormous cats with fiery eyes glaring at a wreath of curling smoke that kept rising from the earth and was for ever changing its form. Suddenly the cloud-like appearance assumed a human shape, and then one cat sprang upon the other cat, and mangling and slaughter supervened, and lo ! the smoke was red smoke like unto flame. The book went on to say that this dream was dreamt by Jack somebody or other for three consecutive nights before he murdered Tom somebody else, whom he found with his sweetheart Polly. It was in vain that the slaughtered pair were buried in the same hole, for Jack had dreamt that the cloud of smoke had issued from the bowels of the earth, and that meant that murder will out ; and so it came to pass, and Jack was hanged. “Smoke rising from the ground means infallible detection,” said the dream-book, “as

is evident from the instances given above." Therefore I inferred that when you dream of curling smoke you should avoid following in the steps of Cain !

I am given to understand that dreaming is going out among townsfolk. I suppose that this is to be accounted for from the fact that the townsman's daily life is too full of incident of a certain sort—too crowded, too argumentative, too noisy, to allow of much dreaming. There is no room for any play of the fancy in the conditions of town life. I believe that among our country folk dreaming is coming in again. I have heard a great deal about people's dreams during the last few years. Country people are not living at the same tension as the dwellers in the streets are. They have a great deal of time on their hands ; they are not unused to loneliness ; they sleep for much longer hours, they hardly know the taste of gin ; they are giving up drinking beer ; they quench their thirst with tea, sometimes hot, sometimes

cold, and they have leisure for dreaming. The most common dreams of the rustics in East Anglia are what I must call religious dreams. More than once I have been solemnly assured that the dreamer "has seen the Lord." It would be easy to raise a laugh by detailing the grotesqueness of the vision. It is usually a woman who dreams this dream, and I am bound to say that the result of such dreams is not edifying. I cannot say that I ever knew any man, woman, or child the better for dreaming anything. I have known several who were distinctly the worse for it. A year or two ago we had a menagerie established near us for a couple of days. The week after it went away half a dozen people in the next parish dreamt of raging wild beasts. The hyenas were the worst. One young fellow is reported to have said he was glad he had been to the show, for "he gnaw'd the look of the devil now as he'd never gnaw'd him afore." On inquiry it turned out that he

had been dreaming of the devil, who appeared in the form of a raging hyena, only that he had horns. The wretched youth had a hideous night of it. "That war more nor a dream, that war!" he protested, solemnly. "He came that near to me that I couldn't stir; and he says—says he, in a sort of a whisper like—'I'm arter you!' says he; and I shrook out then; and I woke up, and I'd had enough of him that turn, and I don't want to dream that no more!" Unluckily for this dreamer, however, it is by no means certain that this vision of his will not come back to him. Recurring dreams are far from uncommon. I knew a man who had a dream which haunted him for years. He was always able to fly in his dreams, and the pleasure he derived from his nocturnal soarings into the empyrean was exquisite. About once a month he dreamt that dream, but he never dreamt it in harvest time. Then the men are always working in company, and the work is really

hard work and exhausting. They sleep too soundly then to find any time for dreaming. This man went on at his flying dream for many years, till he was past seventy. He had a long and painful illness, but he slept without dreaming. One night, however, the dream returned, and in the morning he said to his old wife, “Betsy ! I had a *flight* last night. To-night I shall have that dream again—but I sha’n’t come down no more this time !” Next morning the poor woman woke up, only to find that her husband was lying by her side—quite cold.

## *A NIGHT OF WAKING.*

*At all times will you have my power alike ?  
Sleeping or waking must I still prevail.*

I KING HENRY VI.

SLEEP, gentle sleep, Nature's soft nurse, has been very gracious to me all through my life. A sleepless night I have not known for nearly thirty years ; yet somehow it came to pass one night that I laid awake for hours. It was so novel an experience to me that I became quite interested in my *symptoms*, and the longer they lasted the more I found myself wishing that I could record what went on during those four or five hours.

I had had an exhausting day. Some clergymen go through their Sunday duties with little or no effort. I am so unhappily

constituted that I never can “take it easy,” as the phrase is. I speak and read with more emphasis than wisdom ; I preach more loudly than I need ; I have of late years given up delivering written sermons, and such as I do deliver cost me much thought and pains. The result is that on Sunday evening, after some three hours of continuous reading, singing, declaiming, and some eight hours of mental tension not unmixed with anxiety, disappointment, and sometimes heaviness of heart, I am almost always half prostrate by fatigue—a useless log, in fact, and fit for nothing. But “Nature’s soft nurse” comes and tends me, and twelve hours of slumber is not rare with me between Sunday afternoon and Monday morning.

But that night I laid my head upon my pillow disgracefully early, and I was “off” before one could utter a dissyllable. In an hour or so I awoke with a start. Mendelssohn’s outburst of angelic assurance came to

me, as it were from all the clouds of heaven, and the rapture of the great chorus “Be not afraid ! Be not afraid !” startled me like a revelation in the darkness. I sat up in bed and listened, but the silence was awful. It seemed to me that the ticking of the clock had ceased. I waited, and the old clock began again. Now you must please to understand that three or four days before this I had heard that same chorus rendered with wonderful precision and effect, and it had stirred me with a profound sense of wonder and joy all the more intense because it was so familiar. But what made the clock stop and then go on again ? Oh, you wise ones ! Of course you will account for it. I know all about your theories, and if you ask me how long it stopped I can only say it was for a space of time somewhat between five minutes and eight hours. But nothing shall persuade me it was for less than five minutes. I tell you I sat up and listened for it, and the thing wouldn’t go on !

Then I laid me down again and closed my eyes, for they were very weary, and they ached and throbbed. But sleep had gone from me. I was horribly wakeful. I became conscious that I had *no will*. I was like the man in Horace, who was possessed with a delusion that he was sitting in a theatre, and scene after scene was shifted, and the dancers danced, and the players played, and the drama went on in its regular course, and that poor man redoubled his applause. So it was with me ; but I took all the parts, and the dialogue came *from* me, it did not come to me. It was a glorious and elaborate tragedy. There was a poor desolate maiden, who was most cruelly wronged ; and I hated myself when a tall burly Jew flouted her, stabbed her, and hid the dagger in her lover's scabbard, and then went on to play the part of virtue's champion, and was triumphant after all. I hated myself for conniving at the crime, but I lay there passive, wide awake and passive.

I felt my arm was getting very cold, but I had not the power to move it under the bedclothes. When I did shift my posture imagination seemed to have passed from me, and memory was roused to preternatural activity. It began by my seeing my grandfather springing out of his yellow chariot ; and I wondered why he wore that queer little pigtail, and who tied it up for him. People long dead came by the score, mixing with living men and women, talking, laughing, quarrelling. People I had never thought about for years, nor cared for at any time. Gradually they resolved themselves into a sort of debating club, everybody having his *views*, and everybody expressing himself with a precision and fluency which vexed me with a painful envy. They talked and argued for hours and hours, and the clock went on ticking, and I was nowhere. At last, out of the chaotic hubbub some order and method arose, and my dead friend V——, with his low voice, declared quietly

that the days were coming when men would no longer condemn suicide as a moral offence, but sometimes condone it, sometimes applaud it. The Lady Theodora, with her glorious eyes, flashed at the speaker imperiously. I had no suspicion till then that she was wondrously learned. She knew Plato's "Crito" by heart it seemed, and she quoted Socrates word for word—a whole page of it. I could not have done it to save my soul. She glanced at Dr. Donne's paradoxical work, the "Biathanatos," reasoned closely, criticised as she went on ; wondered how Donne could be so silly as to say that bees sometimes kill themselves. Argument, quotation, illustration, followed on, always sweetly, persuasively, sometimes impetuously ; and they crowded round her, and I lost their distinctive individuality—they were a mere crowd.

Memory was becoming blurred, the dialectic faculty was taking up the game. We came to no conclusion. There was a

tangle of discussion. For an hour or so we talked of fascination, possession, and that which we call mesmerism. Another dead friend broke in gaily. I did not see his face ; but he was present, and he called to me laughingly, “I possessed you once—you know I did ! I wondered myself at my ascendancy—was it physical, or intellectual, or the other thing, eh ? Clearly it was not moral.” I am sure the Lady Theodora smiled. I turned wearily, stared into the blackness. The clock went on as before. Sleep would not come. But was this wakefulness ?

“Can’t you sleep ?” said the living voice of one by my side. I fenced with the anxious question, then I got up and looked at the stars. There was a mist covering the face of the earth, but not a sound, not the stir of a leaf. The moon had set. I was very, very weary. I laid me down again. I began to worry myself with regrets, with plans, with new schemes. An

unaccountably fantastic wish presented itself. "As soon as I finish the half-dozen tasks I have in hand," I said, "I'll translate the 'Misopogon of Julian the Apostate!'" That set me thinking of one of old Biddy's odd sayings : "Working men ha' got no call to have beards ! They'd be a deal better without 'em. Esau was the first as we read on that wore a beard, and much good it did him !" I was back again among my own people now, and memory, with some simple homely reminders, came to me with messages of refreshment. Hark ! there was the sound of some travelling van that came on and on and passed along the road and went off into the distance till there was stillness again. "Suppose it was the phantom coach !" I thought to myself, and then there came back to me stories of that phantom coach, and I recalled them one by one till a flash of self-reproach startled me as I reflected that I had kept all these to myself from year to year, and that one or two of

these stories would die with me if I did not write them down. I had almost utterly forgotten Biddy's weird story of Jarge Mace (they pronounce George *Jarge* in Arcady) of Attleborough, and how the coach came to fetch him, "down there by Breccles Hall somewhere." It all came back upon me last night with extraordinary vividness. How had it come to pass that I had never told it to the world ?

Then I thought I would write about it the very next day, and I began to plan it out and to give myself to the future—to the morrow—not to the hour, nor to yesterday and the times gone by. And so as I lay thinking consciously at last, strange to say, the clock stopped again, and there came another sound : a human hand—it was the hand of the Marchioness—was knocking at the door. I had been asleep for some hours after my spell of wakefulness, and it was time to rise and be about my work ; for we all have our work—even we poor useless country parsons.

## *THE PHANTOM COACH.*

### I.

*Come on, then ; horse and chariot let us have,  
And to our sport.*

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

IF you have never heard of the Phantom Coach that travels about the old roads and old trackways of the county of Norfolk, it is your own fault ; it is not mine. For I have written of that coach in a book that will do you good to read and do me good if you buy it. I wrote about that coach mockingly once ; I tremble to write of it as if it were a delusion now. Have I not spoken with those on whom it called, at whose doors it stopped, who saw the flash of its lamps, who heard the roll of its wheels, who have shuddered with a sicken-

ing horror lest it had come for them, and only breathed again when it had vanished and passed on ?

Who knows not "King Solomon's Mines" and "She" ? I had almost written "Her" ! The gifted writer of those fascinating books had a father, and he was my neighbour and friend. A more robust and genial man I never knew. Let his gifted son forgive me if I take leave to repeat what he told me more than once. I think it was Christmas-time, or about the turning of the year. There was a joyous company in the house ; they were waiting for one of those vigorous and manly sons of the large-hearted squire, who that night was expected home. Suddenly first one and then another cried : "There he is !" Sure enough, the sound of wheels was heard coming up the drive ; the carriage stopped as usual at the inner gate ; then it came slowly up to the door, and some of the party ran to greet the new arrival. There was nothing to be seen. Though all the

household had heard the sound of the wheels, and all were ready with words of welcome on their lips, yet there was nothing! It was a windless night, and it was absolutely impossible for any real vehicle to have come and gone; yet as absolutely certain to the minds of those who were present on that occasion that a carriage had come up to that front door and had vanished—whether into the bowels of the earth or into the infinite ether, none of them would have dared to say. But nothing happened—nothing.

Longham Hall is a very different place from Bradenham Hall. Bradenham is the house of “a fine old English gentleman, one of the olden time.” Longham is a better sort of farmhouse, with as little romance or sentiment about it as about any house in Bedford Row. It was newly built about forty years or so ago. The road had been newly made, and the fresh gravel had been laid down not many weeks, when H., the tenant of the farm, went to bed as usual, and all the family were

sound asleep. He was awakened by the very unusual sound of carriage wheels upon the gravel ; the carriage came on and on, exactly as in the other case, and stopped at the front door. He sprang out of bed, threw up the window, and saw the flare of carriage-lamps under his very eyes. He called out, asking who was there. There was nothing to answer ; nothing to be seen ! The practised ear of the old yeoman could not be mistaken when he said, “No fewer than *two horses at least* could have drawn those four wheels over the new gravel.” He evidently believed that it must have been a coach and four. Yet when the morning came, it was clear that the outer gate had not been opened ; not a wheel had passed over the gravel. Friend H. told me all this, and was prepared with a theory to explain it all, but inasmuch as his theory was by far the most incredible and incomprehensible part of the whole story, I found no difficulty in forgetting it, and if I remembered it I would not repeat it. There

are some things “that don’t bear repeating”! I have heard a great many ghost stories in my time, but I never heard one of them so silly as the very best attempt to show how it was that so-and-so was seen and heard. The credulity of incredulity beats the credulity of superstition hollow! Nothing happened—nothing.

Now comes old Biddy’s story. Breccles Hall is one of the most beautiful and interesting Elizabethan houses in the county of Norfolk. It was dismantled and turned into a farmhouse about sixty years ago, and the heraldic shields in stained glass that were at that time in the windows were removed to the mansion of the purchaser of the estate, together with other memorials of former owners and occupants. Breccles Hall has a history. It was a place of resort and hiding for the Seminary priests who were hunted and proscribed and barbarously slaughtered in Queen Elizabeth’s days. It was a place at which Mass was said every now and then,

when the doors were shut and a few trembling but devout worshippers ventured to gather together at the secret invitation of Mistress Eleanor Woodhouse, who lived at Breccles, and whose husband had to pay heavily for his wife's stubborn clinging to the old ritual. Then it was a place where Lady Baldock lived and where she died, and when she died she would have herself buried in an erect position in the church hard by. It was a house which for three hundred years no owner seems to have been able to hand down to a grandson of his own name. It is a house in which tradition says that once upon a time there came some cowled monks and settled there; and certainly, among the pictures that once hung upon its walls, there was a picture of two nuns that stood out of the canvas, and would have walked out of it but that one held the other by the hand, and so they were a check either upon each. Lastly, it was a house in which two of its owners are said to have committed suicide.

One certainly did ; I have my doubts about the second.

Put all these things together, and if Breccles Hall is not a haunted house, and has not been a haunted house for three hundred years, all I can say is that it ought to have been. I have my own suspicions—and they are strong ones—that it was dismantled at last, because it was held to be haunted. Think of the accumulation of facilities for *ghostliness* here. A lady buried upright ; her head not six inches from the pavement of the chancel. Wandering Mass priests, scuttling behind the arras and hiding in the roof. White monks and black nuns. Mangled suicides, and childless old gentlemen mumbling in their desolate orbity ; and the owls hooting, and the woods moaning, and the rats making night horrible with their maddening squeakings at wholly unaccountable times. What ! That house not haunted ? Impossible !

Be it as it may. The Phantom Coach

called there some ninety years ago—called and fetched away *Jarge* Mace. And who was *Jarge*, and how much of him was fetched ?

## II.

“I’VE been to Breccles, Biddy ! I suppose you never heard of Breccles.”

“Not heerd o’ Breccles ? Dash it ! The first sixpence I ever had o’ my own I got at Breccles !” said the old woman. Then she proceeded to tell me how it was. Biddy was a “little ‘un,” and she had an aunt who was dairymaid at Breccles Hall—and Squire Taylor “give my aunt leave to have me stop wi’ her, and I slept with aunt, that was when Mrs. Taylor was alive [she died in 1807], and Miss Penelope was there, too ; she was Squire Taylor’s sister, and Mr. Philip, him as shot hisself, and Miss Maria, she took and gave me a kiss, *she* did. But it was Miss

Penelope as gave me the sixpence. She was what folks called a mighty stately old lady. But she gave me sixpence. That's where the coach stopped and fetched Jarge Mace!"

"What coach, Biddy?"

"Why, the coach as goes about at night-time!"

I gathered that about this time Squire Taylor was out at elbows. Perhaps the son had taken to evil habits. Perhaps the good man was over-housed, perhaps the times were bad—indeed, they were bad times for the landlords at the beginning of the century. Be it as it may, Squire Taylor had been cutting down the timber. "Miles and miles o' woods," said Biddy, which you must accept *cum grano*. Bad times have a tendency to bring out all the badness in half-starved men. There was a wide stretch of open country, heather—commons not yet all enclosed—and waste lands to the west of Breccles, where there were large flocks of

sheep and rabbits; and to the east there were still some squires' houses, and pheasants and hares in the spinneys; and it was whispered that there was a regular band of smugglers, who were organised to carry *Hollands* across the open from somewhere to somewhere, and who, somehow, had confederates who did something while the peasantry kept their eyes open or shut according as it suited their purpose.

One night—it was at the beginning of the century, and a little before Christmas-time—a band of fellows from Shropshire and Rockland agreed to meet in a plantation “somewheres behind Breccles Hall,” and one of the men was a certain George Mace, who was a very black sheep at the little town of Watton, or near it. The probability is that Mace was the leader, and that the fellows were bent on “drawing the covers” round Merton, where the second Lord Walsingham kept up some state when he was in residence.

"Mace ! Mace ! Why, there was a great prize-fighter named Mace, Biddy. Any relation of his ?"

"Begging your pardon, sir ! Boxer Mace was Jem Mace, and he came from Bilney or thereby. I've often had a chat with Jem Mace before he took to boxing. But there's a lot of Maces round about Bilney. Jarge Mace he came from Watton, and he was christened Jarge because he was born the day the king was crowned, and I never heard tell as he had nothing to do with Boxer Mace !"

Then came many speculations about the illustrious house of Mace and the most illustrious Jem—who, I was informed, took a public-house in Norwich, where he ended his days in the odour of beer and tobacco—till we came back at last to Jarge, and how he was a mysterious sort of a man, who was never without money in his pocket, though nobody knew where it came from ; how he never did a stroke of work ; how he was sus-

pected of having been implicated in two or three serious robberies, and had never been even apprehended ; how folks said he kind o' set on other rogues, and gave information, and was a sort of a spy who had methods of his own which he followed in a sly Satanic way ; how he was a woman-hater, and a man who could drink all night in the ale-house and never open his mouth ; how his only ostensible means of livelihood was skittles, which he played for miles round ; and how he had played a keeper for his velveteen jacket and won it and wore it for years, "and never wore no other, so I've heerd my aunt say. But aunt never saw him, 'cause the coach came and fetched Jarge years before my aunt was dairymaid at Breccles. But she was that afraid of Jarge and of the coach coming to the Hall that she couldn't sleep o' nights watching for it. And it was all as ever Miss Penelope could do to make her stay two years, though Miss Maria kept laughing at her all the time.

And at last she couldn't bear it, and she went and got married."

Whether the fact that Squire Taylor's son, daughter, and sister were all unwedded, though they were at least mature when Biddy's aunt was dairymaid, had awakened a dread in that virtuous female's mind lest she, too, as an inmate of the Hall, would be infallibly doomed to celibacy if she remained there ; or whether she was haunted with the dread that where the coach stopped, there could be no marrying or giving in marriage, I cannot take upon me to determine ; but Biddy's aunt "went and got married," and for the rest of her life she would frequently recur to the coming of the coach, and every particular and detail of her narrative she protested with solemn oaths and asseverations was true as Gospel, and Biddy believed her as in duty bound.

This little band of poachers or thieves—it is hard to say which—met at the trysting-place in the plantation. They received their

instructions from Mace, who, it was agreed, was to watch the house for a certain time, then join them “somewhere by Thompson way, I’ve heerd my aunt say.” There again Mace was to be the look-out man ; finally they were to get back to Breccles Hall and *settle up* before the moon went down. After that, each was to get home at his own risk as best he could. Everything went smoothly, everything had been skilfully arranged. As to the plunder, whatever it was, aunt couldn’t say anything about it. The moon was getting low. The rogues crept back to a shed behind the Hall and waited. Mace was not there. They listened, and heard nothing. One peeped out, and then another ; and time wore on and the moon got lower. Hark ! Rumbling along over the villainous roads that scarcely deserved the name, a carriage was evidently making its way to the front door. The four fellows saw the coach-lamps flashing through the stained-glass windows of the old mansion—*the very coats*

*of arms were painted on the hoar-frost at their feet.* At the front door the coach stopped ; they heard the carriage door open, the steps let down—the door was shut again with a slam. The next moment there was utter darkness, the moon had set, and the stillness was as the stillness of the grave. In the house it was evident that no one had heard anything—no one was awake, no one stirred. The coach had vanished.

Then those four men went their ways ; they would stay no longer. Next morning Jarge Mace was found lying dead at the front door of Breccles Hall. Not a mark upon his body ; not a stain upon his garments ; his eyes staring glassily, stiff and cold.

And yet arrogant sceptics have the hardihood to disbelieve in the Phantom Coach, and will maintain that it never did set down anybody, or pick up and fetch anybody, not even Jarge Mace.

### III.

WHEN I wrote on the subject of the Phantom Coach in November last, I never thought that I should have occasion to recur to it again. But it so happens that among the letters which came to me as a natural consequence of my rashness in dealing with so mysterious a phenomenon there are at least two which it seems to me that my readers ought to be made acquainted with, be they sceptics of the most pronounced type who are prepared to disbelieve anything and everything, or be they the so-called spiritualists whose credulity has no limit. For myself, I am one of those unhappy eclectics

whom the Philistines abhor because I do believe something, and the visionaries denounce as a mocker because I stand by the laws of nature, and cannot conceive that twice two can ever be equal to five. We are an unfortunate band, we eclectics. During the last year or two I have found myself stigmatised as a dangerous Radical, a bigoted Tory, and a crypto Papist, only, as far as I can see, because I am not a dangerous, bigoted, or crypto anything. If I were only a poet I could understand why I should have this hard measure, for it was of a poet that it was said—

He's a traitor, blasphemer, and what rayther worse is,  
He puts all his Atheism into dre'ful bad verses !

But being a mere man of prose, why should mine enemies box the compass, as it were, and paste me all over with tickets like an old portmanteau that has been upon its travels ?

You, my superior people, do not believe in the Phantom Coach. Good ! I am not

going to argue with you. You spiritualistic people—you look askance at me because I do not believe as much as I ought about the said coach? Good again! I'm not going to argue with you either. I never knew a man of fifty who was argued into anything; and most of you, I am informed, are over fifty—and so am I.

Nevertheless, here are two letters which are lying before me as I write. You are welcome to the extracts from those letters, which I am permitted to make public. It is no fault of mine that I am compelled to withhold the names of persons and places, which have been communicated to me in confidence.

The first letter is dated November 7, 1893. It was written by a lady of good birth, education, and position, and this is what she says:—

“We live in an old-fashioned mansion in —, and on September 9, seventeen years ago, my sisters and I were sitting quietly in

the dining-room after supper, and three small dogs were lying before the fire. The night was very still, but suddenly the stillness was broken by the sound of wheels on the drive, coming towards the house. The dogs began barking, and my sisters exclaimed 'There is a carriage coming up the avenue !' I may mention that for some days we had been expecting a brother from the north of England. Someone looked at the timepiece, and said, 'It will be Henry ; he must have come with the last train !' My sisters went to the door to welcome him, and I went and looked out at the window. Shading my eyes from the light in the room, and peering through the Venetian blinds, I distinctly saw a horse (harnessed) standing halfway past the porch at the door. It was a brown horse, and the ears were lying a little back. I said aloud, 'It is Henry ! There's a trap at the door,' and then I followed my sisters. Imagine my feelings, on going to the door, to see *nothing*, and my sisters gazing around

in blank amazement. We returned to the dining-room feeling rather queer and eerie. After a bit a thought occurred to me to ask the servants if they had heard anything. On going to the kitchen, I said, ‘Did you hear anything?’ ‘Yes,’ they said; ‘we heard a carriage come up the avenue.’ Further inquiry elicited the fact that they had heard it coming some distance away and then stop at the house, and they had remarked among themselves that it was a long time in going away.

“As many members of our family were from home, I made a note of the date and hour; but nothing happened, and ever since all our friends know the story as the ‘Phantom Carriage.’ . . . I ought to mention that looking out of the dining-room window, as I did, although a carriage is at the door, it is only the horse that can be seen.”

I have very little comment to make upon this simple narrative; it speaks for itself. But I wonder why those three little dogs did

not run to the door and go for that horse. But then dogs do so dearly love a Turkey rug spread before the fire, and it may be that they had heard enough to make them reluctant to carry the matter any further. That was really a very profound remark of the philosopher who confessed that he had never yet *got inside a dog's head*.

Seventeen years ago is an unco' long time. It's several thousands of days ago, and tens of thousands of hours ago, and of course—of course—what happened all that time ago can't be quite as true as what happened the day before yesterday. "Julius Cæsar ? Who's Julius Cæsar ?" said a grumpy old parishioner of mine to a persistent proselytiser. "For all I know, or you know, he may have been aboard of the Ark. I ain't agoing to be took all that way back !" Just so ; I am painfully aware that the historic imagination requires to be cultivated laboriously before it can go "all that way back." After seventeen years we may begin to doubt any evidence. To

begin with, none of those dogs can be alive now, and if they were they'd be so deaf that it would be useless to cross-examine them !

It is therefore advisable that we should have better evidence than that of seventeen years ago. Wherefore let my readers ponder the following letter, dated November 30, 1893, and dated from a house in the county of Norfolk, the peculiar land of the Phantom Coach, as I till recently had believed. Also, let it be remembered that the article on the said coach was published on the 4th of that month. The writer of the letter is a beneficed clergyman and well known in the land of the East, whence in old times the wise men came, but where now they stay because they are so wise. Thus writes this wise man :—

“On Nov. 13 I was dining with the Volunteers, and on my left . . . was a doctor who lives just at the top of my lane. He said to me, ‘Were you dining at X on Saturday?’ I replied, ‘No! but why do you ask?’

‘Oh !’ he replied, ‘ because I was on the X road on Saturday, and I saw going before me into Y a carriage with lamps lit, and I thought it must be yours, because it turned down your lane and in at your gate ; and when I went in my wife said to me, “I suppose the W.’s were dining out ? I have just heard their carriage drive in.”’ ‘Well,’ I replied, ‘ we certainly were not dining out on Saturday, and at the hour at which you saw the carriage I was in bed and asleep, and I certainly heard nothing.’ That, Sir, is the story, and I do not attempt to explain it. No one living in that lane has a carriage-and-pair except ourselves. . . . There is no train at so late an hour.”

As far as I am at present informed, this is the last appearance of the Phantom Coach in its native county. On this story I have even less to say by way of comment than on the previous one. A suggestion has been offered which will be fully approved of by the Philistines and make them very happy,

but will correspondingly distress their more physical fellow-creatures, always provided that it suffices for its purpose of accounting for the facts. And whenever you are compelled to admit facts that are hateful to you, you may always get rid of them by *accounting for them*. The suggestion is this : A band of Philistines—"india-rubber idiots on the spree"—are supposed to have hired a carriage-and-pair from somewhere, and to have driven down from nowhere in particular till they came to X. Then they drove to that particular lane in the dead of night, and secretly drew back to where they came from. Also it is supposed that they were induced to take this nocturnal drive, with lamps lit and a coachman on the box, in consequence of the profound effect produced upon them by a certain article in *The Illustrated London News*, on November 4, 1893. Very odd, isn't it ?

## *BOOKS THAT HAVE HELPED ME.*

. . . . .      *When*  
*We gloriously forget ourselves, and plunge*  
*Soul-forward, headlong into a book's profound,*  
*Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth—*  
*'Tis then we get the right good from a book.*

AURORA LEIGH.

WE read of the late Colonel Newcome that when he took up his abode in that famous mansion, 120, Fitzroy Square, he had a vague hope that he might renew his youth, and live on quite familiar terms with the generation below him. Accordingly he had occasional gatherings, to which he invited his juniors, Mr. Pendennis, Mr. Warrington, and such as they, who were born when the worthy colonel had already arrived at middle life, and were to him but as striplings. Poor Colonel Newcome found that he was not at his ease. Between him and his guests there

was a chasm : they could not, somehow, shake hands across it, and he grew sad. It slowly dawned upon him that the old and the young cannot hope to enjoy perfect sympathy. Love, veneration, esteem, may exist on the one side or the other, but there is a point at which entire communion is necessarily interrupted ; the man of sixty and the man of thirty can never have the same point of view.

Now, I have passed my sixtieth year ; how much I have passed it I decline to say. I have a painful suspicion that the young fellows in the twenties or the thirties hardly understand what this admission implies. I was not brought up as you were, my respected friends. I did not even eat and drink the same things that you did when you were boys, still less was I taught as you were. To begin with, we were supposed to know Latin by instinct fifty years ago in England. There was, indeed, a translation of the Latin rules at the end of the Latin

grammar, but there was none at the end of the Greek grammar ; for, by the time a boy began Greek, he was presumed to have no need of anything in the shape of a “crib.”

The only dictionaries we had was a thing called “Ainsworth’s Latin Dictionary,” which might have been better ; and another thing called “Schrevelius’ Greek Lexicon,” which could hardly have been worse. Schrevelius was a Dutchman, who published his meagre volume in the eighteenth century, and, until some fifty years ago, it was absolutely the only help which English schoolboys had to enable them to acquire any knowledge of Greek. But Schrevelius had not a word of English in it : we learnt our Greek fifty years ago through the mediation of Latin, and when we “looked up” a word in the lexicon we got the Latin equivalent, and that alone. It is literally true that I do not remember the time when I did not know Latin ; and one of my earliest recollections is that of having got a prize in my ninth year

for repeating from memory nearly seven hundred lines of Ovid better than a dozen other urchins who competed for the same prize, and whom I distanced, to the joy of my proud parents. This was—well ! it was more than fifty years ago.

As far as I can remember, schoolboys in those days never had any English reading-books except “The Boy’s Own Book” and “Robinson Crusoe.” Sir Walter Scott was alive, or, at any rate, he had not been dead long, but the Waverley Novels were a great deal too dear to allow of a boy reading them except in the holidays. The first of them that I remember devouring were “The Black Dwarf” and “The Talisman.” But there was one English book which we all were expected to “get up” before we were “called to construe,” and that book was the first volume which exercised a really powerful and permanent influence upon me in my early boyhood : that too was a dictionary, to wit, “Lempriere’s Classical Dictionary.”

There is no such thing as a classical dictionary now. It has given place to the "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography," forsooth, and that means about the very dullest and dreariest collection of articles on biography and mythology which the severest learned pundits can be induced to compile for the cultivation of the critical faculty, at the expense of everything else, in the minds of boys and girls. But "Lemprière's Dictionary" was about as different from your modern dictionary of classical biography and mythology (and as superior, from the literary standpoint) as a plum pudding is superior to a dog biscuit. Dr. Lemprière was a merry old scholar who had been brought up upon Ovid and Virgil and Homer and Herodotus, and upon very little else. He believed all the stories in Greek and Roman literature as a respectable and conscientious old Tory should believe them. All your new-fangled scepticism and your rubbishy science of mythology—these were

as unknown to him as the history of the Hittites. “Romulus and Remus, sir—not believe in them ? Why ! you’ll try and persuade me that Balaam’s ass never talked next ! Pyramus and Thisbe only myths ! Why ! a man must be a born idiot to gabble such stuff !”

The longest article in “Lempriere” was one on Hercules. A murrain on the innovators who could not be content with that old name, but have changed it to Heracles ! We had none of your Zeus and Heré and Ares and the rest of them—mere counterfeits ; but good old Jupiter and Juno and Mars and Venus, rollicking about as gods should ; such as they were painted, muscular, rotund, burly, and shameless ; not namby-pamby, finicking things of beauty, that were all grace and smoothness. In our “Lempriere” the gods never glided, they bounced, as Rubens painted them ; and we made no mistakes about them, or it went hard with us. Hercules was in those days

to me a model of what a real hero ought to be. Lempriere's article on Alexander the Great, too, had a great hold upon me, and was a prime favourite. But Hercules ! he *was* a man, and Alexander was but a very feeble imitator of the other. The labours of Hercules were all set down in detail ; all the twelve religiously numbered.

"Lempriere's Classical Dictionary" had a great deal to do in the making of me in those boyish days. My imagination was trained, stimulated, appealed to. I was not turned into a prig and a sceptic too early. I had a world of heroes and demigods about me night and day. I admired greatly ; I had my horrors, my dreams, my superstitions ; I was swathed about with a grand and ennobling credulity. I believed in a past where virtue and bravery and adventure and self-sacrifice were no rarities. History was made to appear to us as a veracious record of the prowess of the strong and the valiant. We had not yet arrived at assuming

that to believe anything outside the range of our narrow experience is a superstition. And thus I am sure that "Lempriere's Dictionary" was one of the most potent, as it certainly was one of the earliest, factors which contributed to the formation of my mind at that period when our minds are in their most plastic state, and when the moulding of them goes on so strangely and so rapidly that it is not always easy for us to recollect when they acquired their shaping, or how the pressure of the guiding hand was applied here or there.

Meanwhile, at school and in holiday-time, I devoured whatever came in my way that was printed, it did not matter much what. We rarely spent more than nine or ten weeks of the year under our parents' roofs in those days, and a boy who, during his holidays, read anything more than he could help, was looked upon by the fellows, when the holidays were over, as a bit of a sneak—a "smug" we used to call him. At home,

however, I used to read a great deal. One vacation I was greatly attracted by Harriet Martineau's "Illustrations of Political Economy." They were to me wonderfully interesting stories, and gave me my first suspicion that a man or woman might actually be a reformer, even a Radical, and yet be virtuous and capable of salvation. But my interest in economics and politics lasted very little over one summer vacation, for one day, behold ! a schoolfellow brought back in his box a copy of "Marmion," and, more wonderful still, somebody put into my box a copy of "Monk" Lewis's "Tales of Wonder." The world has forgotten Lewis, but I am not likely to forget him, and very much less likely to forget "Alonzo the brave and the fair Imogene." "Marmion" I must soon have known by heart, but I am not sure that the "Tales of Wonder" were not even more to me than "Marmion"; and to this day I hesitate to pronounce which I consider most thrilling, the death of Mar-

mion, or the weird adventures of the heroic King Jamie, that pearl of knightly courtesy,

“When in there came a grisly ghost  
Loud stamping on the floor !”

The years that followed this period were remarkable for my first becoming acquainted with Chaucer and Spenser. I could only get extracts of the former, and found him just a trifle hard, but the “Faërie Queene” I read through from end to end, as I certainly did the “Paradise Lost” and the “Paradise Regained.” Milton was the first English poet I was *made* to read ; for my father took me in hand during the holidays and insisted on my learning a certain number of lines by heart and saying them to him. I am bound to explain that these holiday tasks were a penance imposed upon me for the sin of having “Tom Jones” under my pillow. I forget how my sin was found out. It was, however, no severe punishment, and I got to love Milton greatly

and learned much more than I was ordered to learn.

It was just after I left school, and before I went up to the University, that the first great crisis in my intellectual life occurred. I was introduced to the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. I do not, of course, refer to the poetical works, but to that entirely unique collection of theologico-philosophical dogmatism, of profoundly suggestive hints and speculations, of hybrid mysticism, of subtle and pregnant criticism, of dreams and lightning flashes of genius to be found in the prose writings of the Highgate sage. To me, as to many another young man at that time (1844), the "Aids to Reflection" came as a new revelation. I cannot stop to explain how it was so, but the book took such hold of me that for years I rarely passed a week without reading out of it. It followed almost as a matter of course that at this period I should surrender myself to the influence of Southey and Wordsworth. I think it was in

the Christmas vacation of 1844-5 that I made a vow never to leave the house riding or walking till I had learnt one of the Ecclesiastical Sonnets by heart, and I remember many of them to this day. Southey's larger poems, "Thalaba," "The Curse of Kehama," and especially "Roderick," seemed to me then the great epics of the age. I am not at all certain that I gave them too high a place in my admiration, and as I write I cannot remember any English epic that I have been able to read through since I read "Roderick," not even "Festus" or "Orion."

At this period, too, I was given over to Carlyle's "Heroes" and his "French Revolution," and to Shelley and Charles Lamb. My father had known Lamb personally, and was on intimate terms with Talfourd, Shelley's counsel, and from my boyhood I had heard a great deal of both one and the other; but it was not until about 1844 or 1845 that they became the gods of my idolatry, Shelley, however, was not for

long my idol. I suspect it was more from some forgotten perversity, or perhaps somebody of whom I entertained a low opinion *preached* Shelley to me, that I took it into my head to rail against Shelley. There came a time when I humbled myself and blushed for very shame that I should ever have even pretended to speak of that glorious poet with less than passionate enthusiasm. But Lamb : who can *only* admire Lamb ? He is and will for ever be more than a mere author to those that know him. He is a presence, a presiding genius ; he goes in and out with you, haunts you in the kindest, gentlest way.

It was in 1845 that I first saw Tennyson's poems. How I could have lived without knowing them till then I cannot understand. I shall never forget hearing the "Morte d'Arthur" read to me by a friend for the first time.

It was while I was under the domination of Coleridge that the time came when I was

compelled to turn my mind to theological reading ; and it was while I was thinking seriously of preparing myself to take holy orders in the Church of England that my tutor (with whom I had gone through a great many Greek plays, a great many Greek orations, and a great deal else in Greek and Latin literature which it is not worth while to particularise) said to me once, “Before you begin cramming divinity, do read one more term with me, and we’ll go through the ‘Gorgias’ of Plato.” Plato was by no means an unknown author to me, but the Gorgias was quite unknown. The reading of that dialogue, under the guidance of a man of real genius, thoughtfulness, and earnestness, was another (I am not sure that it was not the greatest) crisis of my intellectual life. I don’t see how any young man of any enthusiasm could possibly read the last twenty pages of the Gorgias for the first time without feeling that somehow—somehow—he had caught a glimpse of a new world.

At this time, too, I was a great reader of Jeremy Taylor, especially of the "Holy Living," and I made the acquaintance of St. Augustine's "Confessions," which has been one of my pocket-books ever since. The last of the great writers who, at this period, contributed to make a man of me was Dr. Donne. Those who wish to know who Dr. Donne was must read his biography in the "Lives" of Isaac Walton; and when they do read it, let them be duly grateful to whosoever may have first introduced them to the most exquisite biography in the English language. Be it understood, I do not expect many people will take to Dr. Donne's writings; I can only tell them that I owe a great deal to them myself, though how I owe it and what I owe I have not space here to explain.

It will be seen from the above only too brief sketch of my boyish studies that my mental culture did not proceed quite in the common groove that others of my genera-

tion travelled along. There were reasons for this which the world will hardly care to know ; let them pass. But my mind was, I believe, one of unusually slow development, as my body was : and when I have carried my readers thus far, I must needs add that I have brought them only to the threshold of my life, to the time of my early manhood, when the world was all before me—all the doubts and perplexities, all the horror of feeling the ground under my feet going from me, all the wonder and amazement which startled me as my horizon widened ; or when, in utter loneliness of spirit, the daylight was blotted out for an hour, no sun was in the heavens, and yet, as I waited, lo ! from the blackness there shone out God's stars. I believe that if it had not been for Coleridge and Tennyson and Donne I should have had no eyes to see those stars. I should have cried, "They are no stars at all, only Jack o' lanterns ; believe them not, my brethren ! "

The time came when I began my ministerial life in a little English village. If I had not been a student during those years, and had not taken a genuine delight in my clerical work, I think I must have solaced myself with drink and "gone to the bad." It was a tiny little place with about a hundred and fifty people in it ; the country was hideous ; "the water was naught and the ground barren" ; the roads were straight as a line and level as a billiard-table ; there was not a hill within five miles of us, and if we wanted to see a stream that a boy could not jump over, we had to go another five miles to look at it. Neighbours outside the parish we had none, and we were as poor as rats. I say "we," for a real princess had stooped so low as to marry me, and we two knew no more of the world than a schoolboy and schoolgirl, to whom life, however, was all *couleur de rose*. We were twenty-four years old, and at this mature age I projected a great edition of the works of Doctor Donne,

the princess helping me. In course of this labour I was driven to make my first acquaintance with mediæval literature. I had, even in my undergraduate days, made the acquaintance of Dr. Maitland's "Essays on the Dark Ages," which had given me my first taste for mediævalism. It is another of the great books to which I owe so much, and I think that if I have acquired any small skill in writing English, I owe the accomplishment more to the influence of Dr. Maitland's style than to that of any other writer alive or dead. Reading it now, with wider knowledge and a wider horizon, I still regard this delightful volume as one of the most precious books in my library, and one of the most original and suggestive books that a young man can read. It is quite *sui generis*. I am not going to criticise it or give anything like an analysis of its contents, but I never knew any one to whom I have recommended it who has not expressed himself enthusiastically grateful

for the knowledge of it ; or who did not regard it as one of his most precious possessions.

I had always been a great reader of history. I daresay I read a great deal too much ; but history in those days was not nearly so severe a study as it has become since then, and if we loaded our memories with huge masses of facts only a fraction of which we could by any possibility remember, that was better than—in our nonage—over-taxing our brains by putting them to the mastering of theories which we could not understand. I read though every page of Hume and Smollett's History of England before I was fifteen, and I kept the pile of pencil notes on the volumes scrawled in a boyish hand, which I could not make up my mind to destroy till I was nearly fifty years old. I read through Hallam's History of the Middle Ages religiously when it was really quite beyond me, because I used to meet Hallam now and then at dinner when

I was a lad. I forget when I first heard of Prescott, but I devoured his works as most young fellows devour a new novel ; but now my Donne labours drove me *pari passu* into two lines of historical study ; first, into the history of the seventeenth century ; and secondly, into mediævalism ; and I dare say, if I had kept to that kind of thing for some years, exclusively, it might have ended in my turning out a blear-eyed Dryasdust.

One day some being from a higher sphere brought us a new book, Ruskin's "Modern Painters," the first two volumes. That was another epoch in my life. We used to drive about the dull roads to the nearest market town in a little pony gig in those days ; we always had a book with us. As surely as the pony gig came to the door, so surely did a volume of Ruskin accompany us on our travels, the princess reading all the while ; and if any one could have heard our exclamations of delight and our discussions and questionings in those long drives, I think he

would have thought that we were as queer a pair of young folks as he had seen for many a day. We were fairly mad upon Ruskin, and we were all the better for it !

If young Americans and young Englishmen do not read Ruskin's "Modern Painters" now, they ought to read it ; and if they cannot read all the volumes, let them at least read that most precious and incomparable second volume, which constitutes the third part of the work, and deals with the imaginative and theoretic faculties. What I owe to John Ruskin's writings I shall never be able to set down in black and white. The only harm that I think they ever did me was that, coming upon me, as they did for the first time, when I was deep in my mediæval researches, they occasioned me an impatient distaste for any book written in a slip-slop style ; and, whereas I formerly never cared much *how* an author told his story provided he had a story to tell, I found myself suddenly growing over-fastidious as

to the manner of a writer, and I became more and more exacting as to the form, and less curious as to the matter, of a book than I had been.

There are three books which I must needs name before I quite take leave of my readers, because they have, each in its own peculiar way, had a wholly incalculable influence upon my mind, and left upon me an impression so deep and lasting that I should find it impossible to exaggerate the effect produced. One of these books was Mr. Browning's "*Paracelsus*"; another, John Stuart Mill's book on "*Liberty*"; and the third, Mr. Lowell's "*Biglow Papers*." If I had the space at my disposal, I could easily show that the incongruity which may appear on the surface in bracketing these three books together is not really so great as it may seem at first sight. This only I know, that, during the last twenty years of my life, very few books in any language have forced themselves so much upon my memory, and

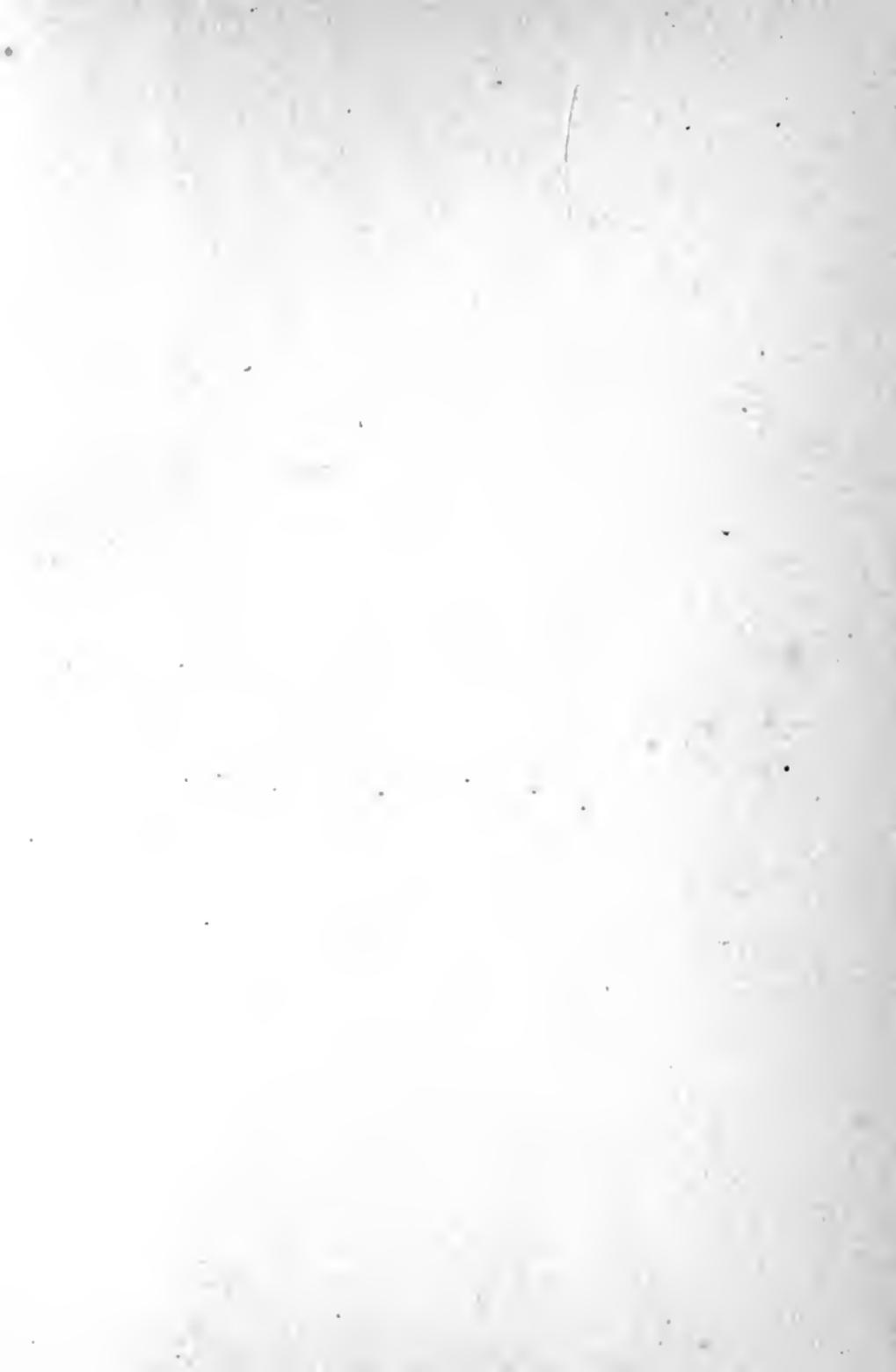
been so much quoted by me, and so much "leaned upon," as the "Biglow Papers." Americans tell me that the book has almost "gone out." It may be so; but if it be so, I am at a loss to think what literary masterpiece in America can ever hope for imperishable fame.

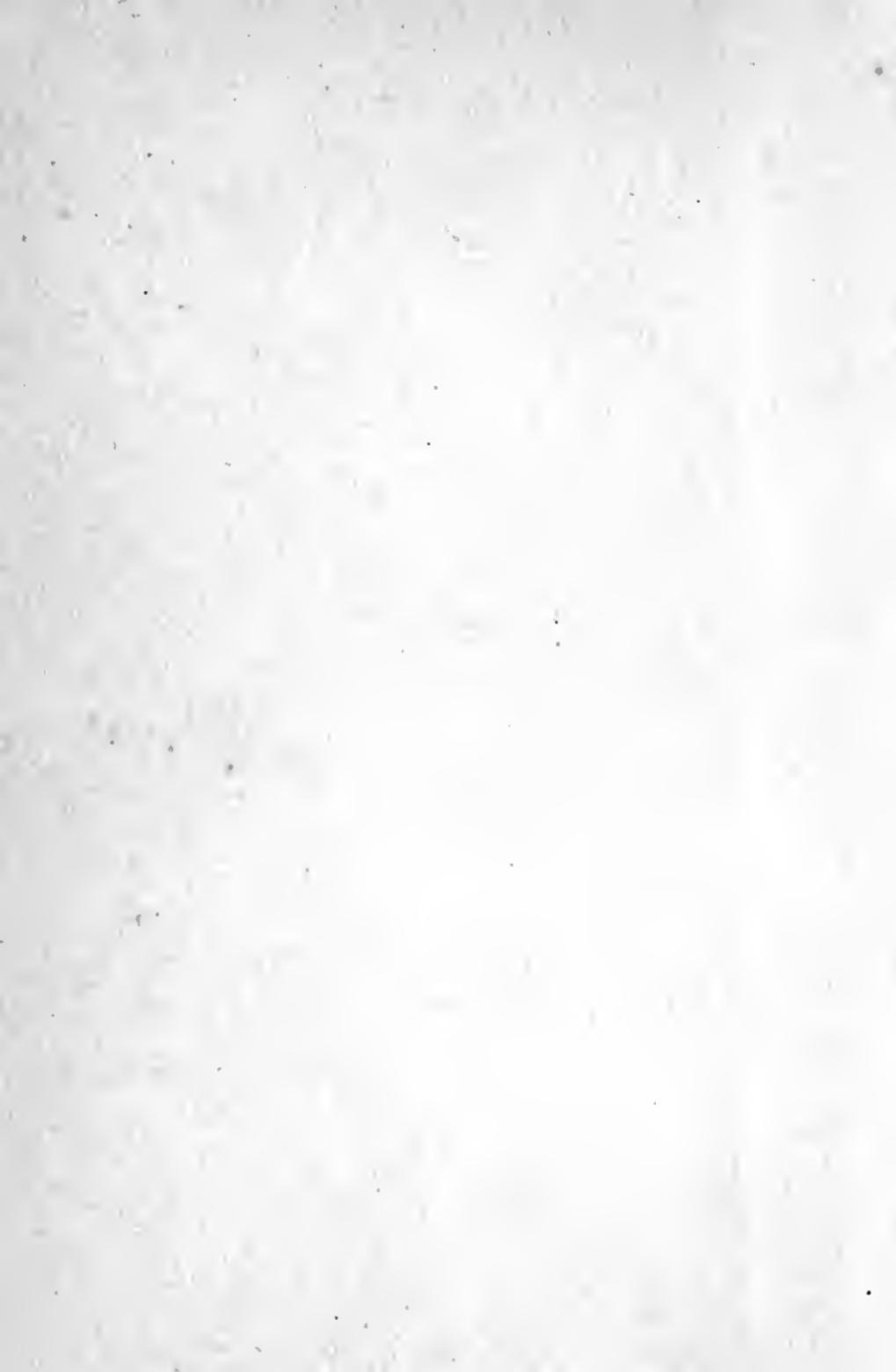
During those same last twenty years I have myself been taking to make books. When a man arrives at that stage he has in great measure to live upon his resources, those blessed accumulations which past study have laid up for him. He gets to *use* books rather than read them as we do when we are young. He has, whether he will or not, to become critical, discriminating, and eclectic. I hate to think or to say that he ever need stop growing, but something like that comes to pass. Let us say he becomes broader, more deliberate. He wants less intellectual food, and—let me hope it—he gets less dependent on it.



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